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*Patterns of authority and  
practice relationships in  
'post-lineage yoga'*

Theodora Wildcroft

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Doctor of Philosophy

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# Abstract

This thesis addresses a significant lack in existing research into the lived experience of contemporary, transnational yoga practice. It starts from two premises: that what long-term practitioners are actually doing in their practice is important; and that the communities in which yoga is taught are vital sites for the production of subcultural knowledge.

The thesis has three major outputs. Firstly, it sets out an innovative methodology of co-practice, notation, and method as experiment that is newly fit for the purpose of studying bodily religious practice. Secondly, it provides a vivid portrait of a specific understudied subculture which inherits aspects of British counterculture previously declared defunct. And lastly, it demonstrates the intra- and interpersonal processes at the heart of the subculture's negotiations with identity, ecology, and authority.

These processes may well be applicable to many more yogic subcultures than presently suspected. As such this thesis includes new models for understanding such subcultures, as well as a new term to describe them that is already being debated beyond the spaces of this research: post-lineage yoga. This thesis therefore holds significant implications for the wider and future study of yoga, bodies and religion.

# Acknowledgements

Just as raising a child takes a village, writing this thesis took a *saṃgha*. There are too many people to name them all. But special thanks go to: Graham and Gwilym for supervision above and beyond the call; to Alison and Matthew for inspirations, collaborations and long conversations; to my carefully picked readers and my case studies, for their generosity; and to Phil for caffeine regulation management and technical support.

In memory of Collette, Matt, and Gavin, each lost too soon.

आचार्यात् पादमादत्ते पादं शिष्यः स्वमेधया ।

पादं सब्रह्मचारिभ्यः पादं कालक्रमेण च ॥

ācāryāt pādamādatte pādaṃ śiṣyaḥ svamedhayā ।

pādaṃ sabrahmacāribhyaḥ pādam kālakrameṇa ca ॥

“A student receives a quarter [of knowledge] from the teacher, a quarter from his own intelligence, a quarter from fellow students and a quarter in the course of time.”

- Traditional Sanskrit sayings

# Contents

Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
List of figures.....	8
1. Introduction .....	13
Defining post-lineage yoga .....	14
A first portrait of a post-lineage subculture .....	17
Post-lineage yoga as a communal religious experience .....	19
The importance of ecology in post-lineage yoga.....	21
Comparing post-lineage yoga with the visible yoga mainstream.....	22
Some early methodological considerations.....	26
2. Literature Review.....	29
Issues with the current scholarly treatment of yoga.....	29
Insights from scholarly examinations of the cultic milieu .....	31
Using historical research to contextualise the contemporary picture .....	34
The impact of existing research upon yoga culture itself.....	36
The relationship between tradition, radicalism and pedagogical power in yoga.....	37
The impact of structuralism and phenomenology on scholarly understandings of yoga .....	42
On the specificity or universality of gendered bodies .....	44
Understanding the role of movement in meaning making and identity .....	47
The place of this thesis within the study of yoga and religion .....	49
3. Methodology.....	51
Research scope .....	51
Experimentation as a method.....	53
Research as an act of service .....	55
Valorising pre-existing expertise in movement .....	57
Fieldwork.....	58
Co-practice .....	59
Analytical frameworks .....	62
Notation .....	63
Some fault lines and conclusions.....	70
4. Colourfest, Santosa and Sundara.....	73
Colourfest.....	73
Santosa Living Yoga and Bhakti Camp .....	79
Sundara: Beautiful Beings of Light.....	85

Introducing key people.....	91
Conclusion .....	100
5. Common subcultural features .....	103
How the subculture relates to lineage .....	104
Some commonly shared forms of movement .....	106
The porousness of ecological space and its effects on the practice .....	112
How the subculture negotiates with its ontological diversity .....	116
The importance of non-transactional service and subcultural notions of ‘radicalism’ .....	118
A unique subculture evolving through common processes .....	122
6. Movement case studies.....	125
Case study 1: “the pristine body” .....	126
Case study 2: the “microbial temple” .....	133
Case study 3: the dance of “Śiva and Śakti” .....	141
Case study 4: “part of you and part of nature and everything” .....	148
Case study 5: “building nerves of steel” with building blocks of practice.....	156
Case study 6: “one step in the world and one step in spirit” .....	162
Conclusion .....	172
7. The structure of individual practice.....	173
Themes emerging from the case studies .....	174
Some common intentions driving the shape of individual practice.....	176
An initial typology of practice elements.....	177
The structure of practice in detail .....	180
Conclusion .....	190
8. Levels of engagement in post-lineage practice.....	193
Visualising the connections sustaining post-lineage peer networks.....	193
Coming to post-lineage yoga for the first time .....	201
A troubled relationship with standardisation and commercialisation.....	205
Making the journey to committed teacher-practitioner.....	210
The tension between charisma and pragmatism for the organiser and activist.....	215
9. Teaching post-lineage yoga .....	221
The context of yoga teaching techniques .....	221
Post-lineage innovations in teaching.....	226
The uneven translation of the practice cycle to group instruction.....	230
Hidden aspects of group teaching and shared movement .....	236
The impact of charisma and interpersonal power on group instruction .....	242
10. Creating a shared repertoire .....	247

The transformation of charisma and personal testimony .....	247
The common use of appeals to science in amplifying faith .....	249
The currents of authority that govern sharing post-lineage repertoires.....	250
Conclusion.....	253
11. Culture and community .....	255
Post-lineage yoga as a community of practice .....	255
The role of place and negotiated relationships to space.....	260
Cultural evidence of the countercultural heritage .....	263
An overview of subculturally shared norms and language.....	264
Subcultural efforts to remain radical .....	267
Conclusion.....	272
12. Conclusion .....	275
The emergence of the term ‘post-lineage yoga’ .....	275
Post-lineage yoga as a unique and unified phenomenon.....	278
The common processes of post-lineage yoga.....	281
The socio-political context of post-lineage yoga .....	283
Implications and suggestions for existing and future research .....	286
Final thoughts .....	288
Glossary.....	289
Indic terms .....	289
Technical terms .....	290
Key people.....	290
Subcultural influences.....	291
Bibliography.....	293



# List of figures

1. Notation key
2. Case study 5: Breath of fire
3. Case study 4: Negotiating space
4. Case study 3: *Uḍḍīyana bandha*
5. Santosa: Cacao Ceremony
6. Sundara: Dances of Universal Peace
7. Sundara: Opening and closing the arms
8. Colourfest: Smiling in squats
9. Santosa: Downward-facing dog
10. Colourfest: Encouraging choice
11. Santosa: Balancing 'Śiva' and 'Śakti'
12. Santosa: Escaping boundaries
13. Colourfest: Taking possession of the space
14. Colourfest: Teaching with osmosis
15. Case study 1: Settling the family
16. Case study 1: Practicing equanimity
17. Case study 1: Adapting Ashtanga Yoga
18. Case study 1: Increasing sensation
19. Case study 1: Established remedies
20. Case study 1: 'Dropping' a vertebra
21. Case study 1: Clearing the 'Moro' reflex
22. Case study 1: The peak twist
23. Case study 1. Enjoying a free breath
24. Case study 2: Adding a pulsing bounce

25. Case study 2: The sprung tension of potential action
26. Case study 2: More fluid movement
27. Case study 2: Holding and binding
28. Case study 2: Balancing ease and strain
29. Case study 2: Sharing a discovery
30. Case study 2: Bringing the forehead to the holy earth
31. Case study 2: “Vortexes of peace and clarity”
32. Case study 3: Adapting *pavanamuktāsana*
33. Case study 3: Exploring the visceral, female self
34. Case study 3: Moving in waves
35. Case study 3: Intensity and innovation
36. Case study 3: Addressing tendonitis
37. Case study 3: A circling refrain of hands and hips
38. Case study 3: Self-massage
39. Case study 3: Adapting *bandhas*
40. Case study 3: Returning to stillness and devotion
41. Case study 4: Choosing the days perfumed oils
42. Case study 4: From breath to movement
43. Case study 4: *Nāḍī śodhana* breathing
44. Case study 4: A space filled with ritual objects
45. Case study 4: Cleansing *mūrtis*, self and space
46. Case study 4: The inner altar
47. Case study 4: Washing Babaji’s sandals
48. Case study 4: Purifying with smoke
49. Case study 4: Singing *kīrtan*

50. Case study 4: Grace in movement
51. Case study 5: Starting stretches
52. Case study 5: Closing with *bhakti*
53. Case study 5: Setting the timer
54. Case study 5: A moment to readjust
55. Case study 5: Explaining intentions
56. Case study 5: Choosing crystals
57. Case study 5: Clenching and pumping
58. Case study 5: A pre-set sequence
59. Case study 6: Symmetrical postures
60. Case study 6: Non-linear elements
61. Case study 6: Adapting *prāṇāyāma*
62. Case study 6: Practicing to the four directions
63. Case study 6: Spirals and infinity symbols
64. Case study 6: Working with hypermobility
65. Case study 6: Transforming esoteric energy
66. Case study 6: Settling into the space
67. Case study 6: Completing the practice
68. Case study 6: Bound lotus
69. The practice cycle
70. Case study 5: Practicing discipline
71. Case study 6: Exploring freedom
72. Case study 2: Pausing to audit and reset
73. Case study 3: Opening the chest, freeing the elbows
74. Case study 4: Emergent movement

75. Networks: Key figures
76. Networks: Uma and Nirlipta's alliances
77. Networks: The Babaji Temple Singers
78. Networks: All affiliations
79. Case studies 1, 2 and 5: *Vinyāsa* variations
80. Colourfest: Woodland floor
81. Case study 3: Dreaming in *yoganidrā*
82. Case study 4: Moment to moment awareness
83. Finding balance with and without help
84. Sundara: 'Trauma-informed' instruction
85. Santosa: Finding your own rhythm
86. Colourfest: Exploring movement variations
87. Colourfest: Witnessing as a group
88. Sundara: Combining correction and accessibility
89. Colourfest: Awakening awareness
90. Colourfest: Struggling to an ideal
91. Colourfest: Adapting according to ability
92. Colourfest: Counting breaths for entrainment
93. Santosa: Curling up for Laughter Yoga
94. Sundara: Finding a common rhythm
95. Case study 6: Impressive mobility
96. Case study 2: Impressive strength
97. Mapping approximate intensity in co-practice
98. Sundara: Building nerves of steel
99. 'Google Doodle' of BKS Iyengar (Laughlin 2015)



# 1. Introduction

Transnational yoga subcultures are increasingly abandoning the myth of a single authentic yoga practice or philosophy. The yoga of this thesis is under-researched, but it is at the forefront of an increasingly visible evolution, in reaction to both guru-transmitted, orthopraxic yoga lineages, and more recent hyper-individual and neoliberal yoga brands. The emergence of this openly contested cultural landscape is what some commentators are calling the “New Yoga paradigm” (Horton 2014: 4), and I am describing as post-lineage yoga.

In 2004, Bikram Choudhury’s global reach and his attempts to trademark a specific practice were held to be a prime example of that which Jeremy Carrette and Richard King so memorably called “selling spirituality” in yoga (Carrette and King 2013: 8). But by 2015 the collapse of Choudhury’s commercial empire following his prosecution in absentia for sexual assault charges (Healy 2015) was a clear example of a very different picture of transnational yoga culture today (Taylor 2018). This thesis is now representative of a rising trend: a wave of questioning established paradigms and authorities in yoga that will have profound and unforeseeable effects in the years to come. In this light, the attempts by Bikram Choudhury to apply copyright to this diverse, living practice could prove to have been the high watermark of decades of collaboration between modern lineage hierarchies and neoliberal business strategies (Puustinen and Rautaniemi 2015: 48).

Meanwhile, millions of practitioners around the world engage in a multitude of practices that they all call ‘yoga’, a term that covers a vast diversity and rich history of practice, philosophy and belief. The Sanskrit word itself has a sense of ‘discipline’ or ‘deliberate connection’ (De Michelis 2008: 17-8). As the product of complex encounters between India and the rest of the world, yoga can be this and more: a physical and mental practice for health and wellbeing; a metaphysical system describing the ongoing creation of the universe; a devotional, ritual practice (Newcombe 2013: 72), or a system of ethics and other social practices for righteous living.

And yet most people’s mental image of modern yoga is of bodies moving and bodies sitting. After the ground breaking work of Elizabeth De Michelis (2007) this is what is now termed ‘modern postural yoga’ within academic scholarship. I will question some assumptions that are encompassed by this definition, and for the purposes of this research I will be using ‘yoga’ with the following technical definition in mind.

*Contemporary yoga is a regular routine that includes self-conscious, ritualised movement focused on **somatic**<sup>1</sup> experience, set within subcultures of practice that are linked to diverse beliefs and engaged in complex relationships with the religions and cultures of the Indian sub-continent.*

Post-lineage yoga in particular is founded on a number of wider transnational trends. Among long-term yoga practitioners, there is increasing awareness of how modern postural yoga was created, and of the mounting evidence of a rich diversity of pre-modern practice. New scientific evidence is being considered. Dissatisfaction with modernised lineage models is mounting, as is criticism of standardised, commercial models of the perfect 'yoga body'. These debates play out on the social media platforms, blogs, podcasts and articles of transnational, yoga-related media, but also at camps, conferences, training courses and other local yoga community events.

## Defining post-lineage yoga

As a result, some communities, writers and teachers within contemporary yoga are evolving their relationships to both lineage and brand authorities. Their yoga is neither entirely guru-sanctioned, nor entirely secularised. Within the spaces of my fieldwork, there are emerging cultural markers that the practitioners and especially teachers of these forms of yoga have more or less in common: they tend to be countercultural, highly educated, ecological, inspired by the complex interplay of Hindu, New Age and European holism, and often concerned with the innovative, the obscure, and with how the practice promotes social justice. My research thus explores one post-lineage subculture, and the common elements of the taught and individual practices at its heart.

At the heart of this subculture are a number of modern yoga practitioners who first came together in some way dissatisfied with their existing experience of yoga. Some had injured themselves doing practices they had been taught were universally safe. Some had enjoyed practices that felt liberatory, and then discovered patriarchal abuses within the schools that taught them. In a number of cases, these negative experiences compounded issues that brought them to yoga practice in the first place. Modern postural and post-lineage yoga are both methods of incremental transformation. By definition, more devoted practitioners often find their initial dedication to regular practice in the changes they want to make in themselves. Anecdotally, these commonly involve lingering lower back pain, general anxiety, and the many other chronic conditions that mainstream medical practice has less success in managing: such

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<sup>1</sup> Terms in bold are included in the Glossary

as fibromyalgia or complex PTSD. Yoga is a health-forwarding activity. But in the end, some practitioners pass for healthy precisely because their suffering and their healing is contained within the practice. When the existing practice or communities of modern postural practice no longer served their needs in some way, however, post-lineage practitioners did not walk away from yoga entirely. Instead, they came together, finding in group solidarity a new way to practice, and joined by those whose schools of yoga were more open to inter-lineage exchanges of knowledge and fellowship.

The interpersonal connections that surround the post-lineage subculture of this thesis strongly suggest that these reactions to the dominant, most well-known yoga systems are not unique. Those more well-known systems rose to prominence partly as a result of nineteenth century encounters between India, Europe and America, mediated by orientalist ideas, and partly in response to the Indian independence movement and a post-colonial revival in Indian physical culture (Singleton 2013: 39). Whilst both emic and etic commentaries on yoga still use these prominent lineages as shorthand for both authentic and standard practice to this day, the actual practice of contemporary yoga may be much more diverse, highly self-aware and networked than we yet know.

This yoga can be described as post-lineage in the same way that Linda Woodhead (1993: 167) once described “post Christian” religious communities as not secularised, but instead engaging in direct, detailed responses to perceived issues with the existing institutions of Christianity. Woodhead’s post-Christian communities agreed in their rejection of the definitive truth of the Gospels, in rejecting divine omnipotence, divine transcendence, an anthropocentric deity, and original sin (1993: 173). In comparison, whilst individual practitioners may or may not maintain close connections to their original teachers, post-lineage yoga rejects the idea that any individual yogic text or modern alignment paradigm can hold complete universal truth, and rejects unquestioning allegiance to a single deity in the form of a living or historical figure. It rejects the common practice of attributing any harm caused within the practice to defects in the practitioner, and seeks to re-situate the practice in community, and socio-political contexts. Post-lineage yoga is a re-evaluation of the authority to determine practice, and a privileging of peer networks over pedagogical hierarchies, or *samghas* (communities) over *guru-śiṣya* (teacher-adept) relationships.

At one event during my fieldwork in 2016, I was invited to chair a wide flowing, passionate discussion about what might be meant by the term ‘post-lineage yoga’. This was a term I had created, and was only just beginning to explore as a useful descriptor for the subcultures I was researching. Most participants in the discussion had already been wrestling for some time with



the question of authority over practice. All agreed that they were not anti-lineage, and were anxious to honour the immense gifts that their lineage-based trainings continued to confer on their practice. But all of them found support for the *ongoing* evolution of that practice in communities where practitioners from many lineages and none came together. Absolute deference to the direct teachings of their first teacher was no longer sufficient. Some talked about the death of a beloved teacher. Others discussed ethical failures within specific lineage communities. Many talked about broadening their knowledge, and being more comfortable within peer-based authority structures. All of them continued to debate the risks and rewards of moving from lineage to peer-based communities of knowledge.

During the discussion, some practitioners described issues with networking with the more dogmatic and isolationist lineages, or schools with very vertical hierarchies. I asked if any teacher had ever taught at the event who was still officially affiliated to the British **Iyengar Yoga** organisation: a corrective, therapeutic and *āsana*-based practice (involving physical poses and movement) for health that very closely follows the original teachings of BKS Iyengar. I was told that this had happened just once, but the national lineage leadership had to be consulted, and stipulated that the event could not be advertised on any of their forums, as non-Iyengar teachers would also be teaching. One person even said:

“The Iyengar police are real.” – [A], at the Santosa Yoga Camp

We discussed the comforting sense of authenticity that can be found in a settled practice, overseen by a paternalistic lineage. We discussed the mechanisms by which personal gnosis, often born in crisis and revelation, becomes systematised, universalised and thus ossified through teaching. We debated the risks of an individual practice based solely on the authority of the individual. As one teacher said: “it’s [about finding] the zone of proximal discomfort”, referencing Vygotsky and Cole (1978). This level of debate among yoga teachers and long-term practitioners is not unique to the spaces of my research.

It is vital to remember that established anthropological research into contemporary yoga cultures concentrates often on the casual practitioner, who attends a weekly class mostly for general physical wellbeing and uncomplicated social interaction. In comparison, the events and people profiled in this thesis may appear unusually dedicated, even obsessively reflexive about the practice of yoga. This is typical of these communities. My respondents are people who have devoted many years, and countless hours, not only to post-lineage practice, but to understanding what it means to them. At some events, I estimate that as many as 80% are yoga teachers, many of them teaching as their main professional activity.

## A first portrait of a post-lineage subculture

I came across this community because more than a decade ago, I began to explore my ethical engagement with the more than human world. In long contemplation of my connectedness to the world around me, I dived deeply into yoga. I trained to teach. I carved what at the time I believed to be a niche for myself between British new animism (Harvey 2006: 16) and Indian-inspired non-dualism, and found that I was far from alone.

Long before this research project began, I sought out yoga camps and other events that were committed to deliberately exploring movement practices within community and ecology. My colleagues were yoga teachers and community leaders who took their practice “off the mat and into the world”, as contemporary yoga teacher Seane Corn would have it (see Corn 2015), with a varying focus on issues of ecology and social justice. I explored *āsanas* and meditation, but also ecstatic dance and sweat lodges, shared feasts and *prasād* (ritual food offerings), *bhakti* (devotional practices) and ritual.

One day, sitting outside the field-café of a small pagan camp, I found myself talking late into the summer evening. That morning, I had led 30 or more people in a morning yoga practice. We stretched and moved and greeted the day barefoot together, as a way of dropping in to intentional community, of easing out the stiffness of sleeping on cold ground, of delighting in the warmth of muscle and the strength of bone, of making a partial peace between body, heart, temporary tribe, and land, as an act of daily devotion.

I wondered how many people gathered each summer in this way, in scattered British fields, and shared this diverse and emplaced practice. I turned to my companion and said:

“You know, nobody actually *knows* what everyone’s doing on their yoga mat. So rarely is the actual content of the practice discussed. And this...” I waved my hand expansively to cover the field, the tipis, and the chanting, massage and meditation workshops. “No-one’s telling *this* story at all.”

For a number of reasons, the academic study of religion has often neglected research into “minority practitioners, vernacular and non-mainstream religiosities” (Whitehead 2008: 164). As this is also an understudied, but also material and lived practice, it is useful in this introduction to provide not only context, but an initial flavour of how a post-lineage yoga event may be experienced.

We begin with that iconic yoga mat. As both place and symbol of one’s investment in the practice it is freighted with personal history in the abstract and specific. And fittingly for an

individualised and idiosyncratic subculture, each group session here is a mosaic of mats of all qualities and materials, including sheepskins, blankets, or no mat at all. But rarely are branded or expensive mats laid out on the dusty grass or under the dripping canvas of practice spaces.



Teachers at Colourfest and Sundara fieldwork sites

Clothing is a more reliable indicator of one's membership of different sub-cultural affinity groups, as different clothes enhance specific experiences. In more energetic sessions, clothing is often minimal, and as taut and flexible as its practitioners. Adepts of practices described as 'soft' or more fluid are more likely to wear softer fabrics and more flowing lines. Those whose practices have soteriological aims are more likely to wear white and purple. Those whose aims are more earth-bound wear more greens, reds, and earthy tones. Many wear second hand, eclectically patterned and homemade clothes.

Like many religious communities food is important to this culture (Harvey 2014: 29-30), both in what is eaten and the rituals that surround it. It is always vegetarian, and communal food is often vegan. Everything on offer fits shifting definitions of 'sattvic' or holistically balancing food, and a high proportion is organic. This subculture associates such food with nourishment, whilst the food produced by corporate agribusiness, like much of modern life, is polluting.

Purifying and cleansing practices are a central feature of all these events, consistent with numerous traditional *hathayoga* practices such as *ṣaṭkarman* (Birch 2011: 3). Many sites feature well-attended saunas. Burning sage, mugwort or Palo Santo are also used to purify spaces and participants, fire and water being seen as the most transformative elements. The more ritualised the activity, the more cleansing is emphasised.



Sauna (Colourfest), shower (Santosa), closing ritual (Sundara)

Traditional Hindu prohibitions concerning the unclean status of certain individuals, specifically menstruating women, are completely absent, although some practices are contraindicated as being less “nourishing” for women at this time. In their place are prohibitions on both legal and illegal intoxicant use, although certain indigenous and native mildly entheogenic plants, including mugwort and cacao, are embraced within specific consciousness-altering practices.

Far from the bare wood floors, the clean white walls, the brand label clothes and pedicures of a city yoga studio, the practice, is as different as the ecology: the movements and shapes have more diversity, less precision and fewer straight lines. Contemplation is less about turning inwards and more about sitting in easeful relationship with the weather, the uneven ground, and the sounds of human and other than human activity.

As I will show, post-lineage yoga may be uniquely developing as it comes into contact with a nature-focused British counterculture. It is not high profile, and these practices, and their communities, are thus far invisible within media and scholarly accounts of transnational yoga. In fact, much of the rapidly evolving, diverse, and above all *moving* contemporary yoga culture of hundreds of styles, schools and loose affiliations, is largely defined only by its perceived distance from the roots of what is often called ‘traditional’ yoga, and from traditional *guru-śiṣya* transmission (Burger 2006: 83). In contrast, when we consider post-lineage yoga as that which moves beyond lineage as the sole authority for practice, we can discover much more about what is risked, gained and lost in this evolution.

## Post-lineage yoga as a communal religious experience

For both practitioners and scholars, yoga as an endeavour is often framed as an individual journey, undertaken through personal practice, in the search for inner wisdom. The standard yoga unit of practice, familiar from both historical tradition (Mallinson and Singleton 2017: 52)

and the narrow representations of yoga in mass marketing, is a reproducible but individual experience, represented by the existential island that is each person's yoga mat. But at its most contemplative or its most standardised, to this day yoga is still most likely to be transmitted through experiences, and by direct teaching, body to body, person to person. As I will show, post-lineage yoga arises in a specifically negotiated relationship between individual exploration and various forms of group sharing.

The patterns of authority that govern this relationship include three sources: the internal wisdom of the self, the external authority of the expert, and the relational opinion of the group. Consciously or not, each change in practice or ethics is justified by one or more of these. The one most often absent from most discussions of yogic religious authority is the latter, the group. Therefore, my research activities compare individual practice case studies, with field work at communal events where yoga teacher-practitioners alternate roles and inspire each other in unpredictable ways. My analysis begins with a comparative overview of the cultural detail and ecology of three post-lineage yoga camps: Colourfest, Santosa and Sundara, and moves to six case studies of yoga teachers who are key figures in their common subculture.



Evening DJ set at one fieldwork site (Colourfest)<sup>2</sup>

The yoga camps of my fieldwork, like the emerging phenomenon of yoga raves, supplement a solitary practice experience with an added relational dimension (Jacobs 2017: 2). But the influence of rave culture on yoga camps is much more aesthetic than substantive. Whilst participants in a rave commonly encounter ecstatic experiences of “communality, equality and basic humanity” (Olaveson 2004: 87), yoga camps are characterised by experiences that are

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<sup>2</sup> All photos of the events are either taken by the author or from each event's official websites

closer to that which Judith Kovach (2002: 949) describes as enstatic experiences, without a hedonistic loss of control or responsibility.

## The importance of ecology in post-lineage yoga

Post-lineage yoga camps are also spaces in which to practise a different relationship to the land, idealised and aspirational but also pragmatic. Participants are encouraged to engage with their ecology in various devotional acts. Within many taught sessions, affirmations to attune to 'higher vibrations' alternate with instructions to 'ground' and 'arrive' and honour the immediate ecology. Balanced between land and sky, earth and heaven, the group comes together "[in] this simple life, where miracles are the essence of every stitch in the tapestry of time and feeling, and arms unfold across worlds", as one facilitator said during a Dance Jam session at Colourfest (photo below).



Many of my participants are engaged in bodily experiences that honour natural cycles and native ecologies (for examples see Dinsmore-Tuli 2015; Sabatini 2009). This sense of the sacredness of physical existence extends beyond place to those natural miracles of living existence usually considered to be mundane, from menstruation to evolution. In one yoga session at Colourfest, we are told:

"There was a tail there once upon a time. [...] See if you can sense that sense of maybe awakening the sacrum, the lower back. And then what you can do if you like is just put your hand on your lower back, like you've got a tail here now, and give it a little wiggle."

Every religious practice adapts to the "qualities and physical expressions" of the places in which they take place, becoming unavoidably vernacular in the process (Whitehead 2008: 167). Tantric or Ayurvedic metaphysics of the five elements or qualities of matter: earth, water, fire, air and *ākāśa* (variously translated as spirit, ether and space) are commonly referred to here. They combine with neopagan understandings of the immediate ritual ecology

of four directions, in their correspondences to earth, air, fire and water, temporally expressed through the waxing and waning of the Wheel of the Year (Whitehead 2008: 171). These elements wax and wane in human bodies too.

The detail of these qualities and their correspondences may vary, but their overall alignment renders possible the translation of sub-tropical non-dual ritual practices into a temperate ecology. Whilst the people, places and practices thus become mutable and permeable (Johnson 2002a: 314), they are not, however, rendered placeless as a result. They are instead subject to the contrasting processes of dwelling and crossing (Tweed 2006).

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue that bodies, minds and ecologies are inseparable, and that an embodied spirituality is necessarily an ethical orientation to the land (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 566). My research therefore examines the ecology of post-lineage yoga as a fundamental aspect of the practice. These are the places and more than human communities in which my participants come to their yoga mats, alone or together, in new ways of being and understanding.

## Comparing post-lineage yoga with the visible yoga mainstream

As a number of commentators have stated, the semiotics of transnational yoga brands and global meditational schools are employed to market health-related products from corporate mindfulness to diet food (Carrette and King 2013: 16; Sanders and Mouyis 2010). As a result, the wide diversity of less commercially oriented contemporary yoga culture described above is mostly invisible to policy makers and academic understanding. When the NHS recommends yoga as a gentle form of exercise appropriate to the masses, it has a specific idea of what that yoga should look like.

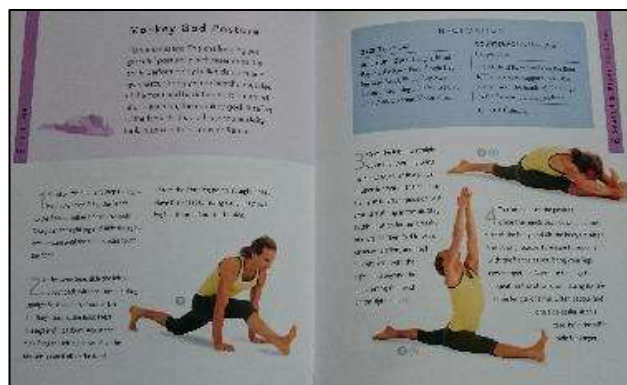


Illustrative photo of yoga on NHS website ('Vinyasa flow yoga video' 2016)



It might not have the fast paced athleticism and commercial innovation of recent transatlantic yoga brands such as Jivamukti Yoga (see "Jivamukti Yoga" 2017), which are as yet mostly confined to a few major UK cities. Its norms arise from a number of historical collaborations between local authorities, the Iyengar Yoga lineage and the national training body known as the **British Wheel of Yoga** (Hasselle-Newcombe 2005: 305-06), all of which have episodically attempted to systematise the transmission of yoga in Britain into a unified, safe, "spiritual but not religious" system (Newcombe 2013: 68; Pettit 2014: 13). Recent responses by the wider British yoga community to the proposal of optional "national occupational standards" for yoga prove how contested that aim is (see YogaAllianceUK 2016; Yates 2016; and Remski 2016a).

How different, therefore, is the yoga that is at the heart of this thesis from the aforementioned widely recognised styles of yoga? Despite the diversity of schools and lineages, a broad sketch of a typical modern postural yoga lesson is commonly recognisable. It occurs in a clean, tidy space, with identical, teacher-provided mats carefully aligned and the teacher's place and role distinct from that of students. The practice itself is conceived of as a series of set physical positions, with clear transitions, and a more or less universalised alignment of process and posture. It conforms closely to the practice learnt by the teacher during their own teacher training. In Britain at least, that training was in one of the dominant lineages or schools of Iyengar, **Ashtanga**, or **Sivananda** Yoga, or in a more generic studio setting, often labelled **Hatha Yoga**, and accredited by **Yoga Alliance Professionals** (no relation to **Yoga Alliance**, based in the US), or the British Wheel of Yoga. It might even be one of the much less intensive trainings in the basic postures of yoga accredited for fitness instructors. It will appear to be focused on health and wellbeing, and thus broadly secular, although more esoteric, axiological and philosophical content will be evident from closer examination. This sequence is typical of the instruction in many classes:



*Hanumanasana*. This challenging yet graceful posture [...] refers to the fantastic leaps this popular deity took in service to his master Rama. [...] Once the legs are straight, sit on the floor and bring the hands together in a prayer position in front of the chest [...]



Stay in this position for ten breaths or more. (Brown 2009: 166-67 and see photo above)

The yoga of this thesis has significant differences. It takes place in spaces with soft edges and unclear boundaries, often at outdoor camps where the ecology, weather, and other people can intrude. In its taught sessions, teachers take turns to step into the role. Practitioners experiment with multiple styles, not demonstrating a commitment to a single teacher. The teachers themselves most often hold allegiance to either a little-known lineage or none at all, and are often members of smaller organisations such as the **Independent Yoga Network**. They were usually first trained by a dominant lineage or generic organisation, but now look beyond that training to evolve both their individual and teaching practice.

At one five-day camp in 2016, there was not a single session labelled with a major lineage. In such contexts, the practice is more unpredictable, and experimental, and diversity, self-reliance and free movement are emphasised. The following instructions from a Yoga and Sounds session at Colourfest are typical:

"Next time you come up into down dog let's stay a little while. Keep it moving, so bend one knee then the other, then both knees together, or high up on to the toes. [...] Whatever feels good. Come out of the pose if you feel you need to. Be intuitive."

The image of contemporary yoga as it is understood by large brands, public policy and much academic scholarship, contrasts strongly with the environments of my fieldwork. And yet, post-lineage yoga may be much more prevalent than its lack of visibility suggests. It may be that the reality of contemporary yoga as taught in community halls and gyms across the world, and specifically as practised by yoga teachers themselves, is more democratic, devotional and idiosyncratic than we yet know.

The camps at the heart of my fieldwork are however also part of a long-standing tradition of festivals and camps in Britain of all kinds, from raucous May fairs (Walford 1878: 345) to Stonehenge jazz camps (Worthington 2004: 23), which are popularly associated with countercultural hedonism, temporary autonomy and community experiences of enchantment common to bioregional ecology movements (Baker 2015; Partridge 2005: 21). Many of these cultural events are small in scale and little-known, and this can be deliberate. The spaces of my fieldwork are spaces to retreat, regroup, and refuel, as one organiser says:

"I think gatherings and camps will always be a part of human life and if that stopped, I think there would be a big degradation in society." – John, Sundara

These events exist between civilisation and the wild, more or less consciously echoing Henri David Thoreau's ideal dwelling position, halfway between woods and village (Gura 2006: 134-5). Thoreau referred to himself as a *yogī* (Broad 2012: 22), and by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, his work had more influence in Britain than on his native America (Harding 2006: 7). By the 1970s, the rise of the environmental movement that took Thoreau as one of its leading inspirations (Harding 2006: 10) was accompanied by an emerging counterculture that widely embraced yoga and meditation.

Overlapping generations of British counterculture collaborate at the heart of this subculture: those who dropped out to create the early music festival scene (Moberg and Ramstedt 2016: 159) and the protest community from Greenham Common; travellers from the Stonehenge Peace Convoy and settlers from Tipi Valley; Newbury road protestors and people who ran sound systems at M25 raves and Welsh free parties; and now activists from climate camps, Occupy and the Calais Jungle.



Yoga at Glastonbury festival (Jones 2015) and Stonehenge ('Stonehenge solstice' 2017)

These camps share in a long history of entangling land use, environmentalism, festival culture and yoga in Britain. They have less in common with the “heroic ethics” of environmental protest activism (Gaard 2001: 14), and more to do with everyday acts of right relationship. Cleaning the toilets at one event is described as “the highest *sadhana*”, a word that encompasses ego-transcending spiritual practices, here adapted to the ideals of ecofeminism and bioregionalism (Gaard 2010: 653). Ethical norms here are influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's teachings on becoming a good citizen through service, justice, and moderating one's consumption habits. Many of my respondents would agree with Godrej's interpretation of Gandhian ethics in calling for “the active, disruptive, political opposition of injustice, and for such opposition to take on the role of citizen rather than that of consumer” (2012: 450).

This is a subculture coming to terms with its own disillusionment with the endless health and abundance promised by yoga gurus, institutions and brands alike. In this it forms part of a growing “culture of descent” (Project 2010: 4) beginning to tell the stories that lie beyond the

peak of late capitalism. It also resituates the discourse of yoga practice, away from promises of unending positive progress (Langølen 2012: 36; Smith 2008: 147), and closer to rhythms of cyclical transformation inspired by both Hinduism and modern paganism. As **Uma** Dinsmore-Tuli said in our interview about Santosa yoga camp: “So I think it promotes a real respect and gratitude. And out of that also a reconnection that we are nothing but earth, you know?”

As a result, this thesis examines both personal and group practices, the lived experiences and spaces in which post-lineage yoga occurs. But I am also guided by my participants’ negotiations with ideas of authority and radicalism, conformity and resilience, both in response to perceived socio-political norms, and the perceived orthodoxies of the contemporary yoga mainstream.

## Some early methodological considerations

The target of my research is a part-time community that commonly refuses to call what it does ‘religious’, preferring the term ‘spiritual’. This separation of spirituality from religion by its adherents is more reflective of a contested relationship to orthodoxy, than a distinction in content. What is under consideration is ethics, ritual, relationship, notions of the self, axiology, ontology and epistemology. This is undoubtedly part of what Graham Harvey (2014) and Robert Orsi (2008) among others describe as lived religious practice. I occasionally employ the terms ‘Tantric’ to describe the post-Vedāntic transformational and immanent intent (Urban 2000: 270), and ‘pagan’ to describe the honouring of nature, community and the seasons within this specific subculture. As for other neo-pagans,

sinkholes, special trees, sacred groves, hillocks, and other organic expressions of nature provide the doorway to the divine, supported by the belief that mystical powers, spirits, or the presence of deities actually shape a place (Saunders 2013: 794).

But bracketing this lived practice and community as religious, pagan and Tantric is a delicate critical process conducted with due reference to the self-labelling of my sources. My research is not unusual in that.

My greatest methodological challenges have been descriptive. They included developing a satisfactory notation form to map spaces, and to enable comparison of extremely diverse practices of movement and **interoception**, or awareness of one’s internal physiological condition. My methodology chapter will return to this in detail. I also adopted techniques from network theory to visualise the levels of engagement and interpersonal relationships that sustain the subculture. As this thesis attempts to connect the physical experience of post-

lineage yoga with the community, culture, and teachings of this particular subculture, my literature review is appropriately wide-ranging, and highly interdisciplinary.

My research examines a key part of the evolving post-lineage edge of yoga here in Britain and considers its relationship to a long heritage of innovation. The most visible aspects of modern postural yoga – the big brands and orthodox systems – may be largely irrelevant to many more yoga practitioners and teachers, sharing practice in homes and village halls and festivals for little financial gain. At the same time, transnational yoga culture is struggling to respond to ongoing post-colonial and nationalist issues, the empowerment of women's bodies as a site of cultural struggle, the commodification of religious practice, role-power and consent within the transmission of practice, and the relationship of its practitioners to their ecological home. In response, my research question asks:

**Within contemporary post-lineage British yoga culture, how does the yogic body in practise change to reflect not only its source, but its evolving meaning, and the relationships of authority within which it is shared?**

As Orsi writes, lived religious practices “are the doctrines, rituals, or signs that men and women have picked up in their hands and are using to engage their immediate world” (2003: 173).

Unfortunately, we as scholars of religion are much clearer about how we study texts, and words, than moving bodies and their motivations. Richard Carp offers a memorable description of academic bodies themselves:

Academic thought is produced by a specifically disciplined body, one that can tolerate sitting for hours in sterile rooms buzzing with the sound of fluorescent lights, listening to word after word after word of lecture after lecture (2001: 99).

Perhaps it is because of this, with some notable exceptions and ongoing investigations, that the story of post-lineage yoga is as yet largely untold. My research engages in debates about orthodoxy, authenticity and religion as it is lived, rather than the ideals of community leaders and scriptural sources. As such, this project is a necessary addition to the study of lived religion. Under consideration is an unorthodox, unregulated practice regularly engaged in by thus far uncounted, and probably rising numbers of participants. Among its diverse aims are healing the Cartesian divide, seeking re-enchantment and reconnection with a more than human world, valorising diversity and personal wisdom, and struggling with commercialisation, regulation, post-colonialism, and gender politics. Whether it is successful or not, there remain

implications for the study of religion that reach far beyond its practitioners, for the study of religion as a whole.

## 2. Literature Review

### Issues with the current scholarly treatment of yoga

Elizabeth De Michelis (2007) was the first to make the attempt to categorise modern yoga practice. De Michelis' contributions are central to understandings of modern yoga, but there is much detail to be added to this first, generalised picture of modern yoga, as the author herself admits (De Michelis 2008: 22), and the decade since De Michelis first turned her attention to this subject has seen many attempts to do so. This thesis contributes part of that detail, but also disagrees with De Michelis' central analysis on a number of key points. For example, De Michelis' work is part of a scholarly pattern in which it is common to describe the majority of contemporary yoga practitioners as giving "little more than lip service to yoga's rich ideological background" (Burley 2014: 214). She contracts postural yoga to the aims of health and wellbeing, and meditational yoga to the aims of devotion. This is a generalisation that others have challenged (Hauser 2013a: 8). It persists fuelled by an academic tendency to confine research into contemporary yoga to either its most casual practitioners, or its most dominant schools or lineages, and in most cases, both.

As a result, contemporary American yoga in particular is still commonly described as a secular amalgamation of post-colonial Indian exercise, Western esotericism, clean eating and healthy femininity (Goldberg 2016b: 273). In the British context De Michelis' seminal typology is most appropriate in describing an 'orthodox' or mainstream view of yoga. This is characterised by those secular providers of yoga-related health and wellbeing practices that are tacitly approved by local authority policy on the one hand, deliberately self-separated from the very different and overtly religious practices of the most well-known meditational lineages on the other.

Yet as I will show, a number of devotional and religious elements that De Michelis describes as being absent from modern postural yoga are significantly present within both the personal and communal yoga practices that I have encountered in this research (De Michelis 2007: 3). As I stated in my introduction, the events and people profiled in this thesis may appear unusually dedicated, even obsessively reflexive about the practice of yoga, compared to established anthropological research into contemporary yoga cultures, which concentrates largely on the casual practitioner who attends a weekly class mostly for general physical wellbeing and uncomplicated social interaction. My respondents are people who have devoted many years not only to post-lineage practice, but to understanding what it means to them. The stark

differences between the yoga subculture of this research, and contemporary yoga as described by existing yoga studies scholarship, demonstrate the important insights that research such as this into vernacular practices in under-studied contexts can bring.

Like other religious movements, the transnational yoga community of more dedicated practitioners is engaged in an often-fraught conversation with its own research. Modern postural yoga as presented in the study of religion is, in the main, concerned with the most commercially successful systems, commonly cited ancient texts and dominant lineages. Indeed, religious studies as a discipline, in attempting to define the scope of its own study, continues to struggle with the inherent power to define certain vernacular practices as not religion, and thus outside the very possibility of inquiry (Orsi 2003: 173).

Meanwhile many sociologists of religion, starting with Jeremy Carrette and Richard King (2013), have extrapolated from the most visible, and most commercial aspects of contemporary yoga culture, to the culture as a whole. Recent critiques of contemporary yoga culture as unthinkingly apolitical are reminiscent of those influential commentators such as Weber who “denied that Hinduism has the capacity for dynamic and beneficial social change” (Beckerlegge 2015: 47). The yoga subculture of this research is, perhaps, unusual in its relationship to both a specifically British counterculture and the contemporary world. Yet while the work of Veronique Altglas and Andrea Jain are useful for setting this research in a global context, my data casts doubt on the universality of much of the narratives of secularised, urbanised, commodified yoga this body of research has to offer, and is a corrective to such scholarly simplification. My analysis of British yoga festival culture in particular paints a very different picture to the global trends claimed by American scholars such as Amanda Lucia (2018). This research project is driven by an intention to begin with the experiences of committed practitioners, and therefore it is a direct response to all those scholars who misuse evidence of a superficial engagement with yoga by mainstream culture, to characterise all contemporary communities of yoga practice.

Within the study of yoga, an unexamined hierarchy of knowledge has thus emerged in which scholars of yoga are often dismissive of the majority of practitioners for not knowing the orthodox history (and by implication the enduring truth) of their practice, even as more orthodox and traditional practices are accorded a more authentic status. Some historian scholars, such as Elliott Goldberg (2016a: 444), go so far as to dismiss even overtly religious paraphernalia and practice elements in contemporary practice as mere pretence. Contemporary practice comes to be defined only by its perceived distance from the roots of what is often called ‘traditional’ yoga, and from traditional *guru-śiṣya* transmission (Burger

2006: 83). This unexamined association of lineage-based yoga with that which is traditional and authentic, and non-lineage-based yoga as that which is casual, commercial and uninformed, parallels De Michelis' original assertion that modern postural yoga practice has little or no devotional content, whilst meditational yoga retains significant religious elements.

In response this thesis moves beyond both assumptions, to examine forms of yoga practice that combine devotional and non-devotional, postural and non-postural elements, taking place in environments that are not separated by lineage but actively share between and beyond them. My case studies highlight practitioners with long and evolving journeys of affiliation to numerous schools, styles and communities of practice. My research examines the ways these dedicated practitioners characterise physical practice as a struggle for a contextualised, authentic experience of the bodily self in conversation with diverse sources of authority and bodily autonomy. And whilst both emic and etic commentaries on yoga still use prominent lineages as shorthand for both authentic and standard practice to this day, as I will show, my analysis concludes that the actual practice of contemporary yoga may be much more diverse, highly self-aware and networked than we yet know.

Lack of scholarly sensitivity to such complex personal histories and evolving negotiations with authority, as well as the uneven treatment of emplaced, acting bodies within Yoga Studies and the wider study of religion, demonstrates as yet unresolved scholarly issues that my research begins to address. It does so through discussion of the immediate, culturally mediated experiences of both researcher and researched. The result is a significant contribution to the study of yoga, and in particular scholarly understandings of authenticity and authority, positionality and performativity, that are foundational to this lived religious practice.

## Insights from scholarly examinations of the cultic milieu

In my introduction, I characterised the yoga practitioners profiled in this thesis as countercultural, highly educated, ecological, inspired by the complex interplay of Hindu, New Age and European holism, and often concerned with the innovative, the obscure, and with how the practice promotes social justice. Although these are characteristics shared to different extents by all my participants, my research population is defined *by the practice of post-lineage yoga* rather than by other cultural markers. A significant number of previous researchers have sought to define similar communities instead by their rejection of religious orthodoxy and by unusual ontological orientations, rather than by common practices. Such subcultures have been variously characterised as part of the New Age, as cults and as new



religious movements, in a complex and contradictory body of research usefully summarised by George Chryssides (2012: 247).

Such research has relevance for this thesis because, as stated in my introduction, the camps at the heart of my fieldwork are part of a long-standing tradition of festivals and camps in Britain at which overlapping generations of British counterculture collaborate and explore diverse and less commonly-held beliefs and practices. As a result, just as my participants share cultural characteristics with such countercultural groups, the scholarly literature on such groups also makes frequent reference to the practice of yoga.

This body of theory has evolved since Danny Jorgenson defined that which Colin Campbell first called the 'cultic milieu', in terms of its marginality and "strange beliefs" (Jorgensen 1982: 385). More recently and usefully, Christopher Partridge describes a specific "wellbeing occulture" (Partridge 2005: 17) as "the soil in which new spiritualities are growing" (Partridge 2005: 2). Partridge's aim, and that of Heelas (2012), Woodhead (2012), Sutcliffe, Bowman and others (Sutcliffe and Bowman 2000), is in part to produce research that accounts for chosen religious affiliations without assuming that chosen spiritual identities are less committed than those which sit within more orthodox and inherited traditions (Partridge 2005: 9), a scholarly position from which this thesis also begins. Elsewhere, references to practising or even teaching something generally only described as 'yoga' are included in lists of signifiers of experimental spirituality and seekership (Sutcliffe and Bowman 2000: 57, 113, 21, 27). Such scholars are rarely specialists in yoga or Indology, and as a result, elements associated with Hindu worldviews such as 'yoga' or 'chakras' are usually accompanied by no examination of their historical origins, nor how they have been transformed by encounters with either modernity or cultures beyond South Asia (Bowman 2000: 91; Partridge 2005: 37).

While Partridge at least separates wellbeing subcultures from the wider phenomenon often characterised as the New Age, his descriptions of wellbeing practices thus also lack precision. His description of contemporary yoga, for example, is taken from the "Body Shop Body Care Manual", whose cover image of "a beautiful, healthy woman, with her eyes closed, wearing an Indian cheesecloth shirt, [...] in a cross-legged yoga posture" bears little resemblance to the yoga of this thesis (Partridge 2005: 5). Neither the reader nor Partridge is left with any clear idea of what yoga involves beyond the marketing of its associated aesthetic. Examinations of what is also called the "holistic milieu" (Harvey and Vincett 2012: 162) in the study of (new) religions, frequently confine themselves to the descriptive ethnography of product messaging aimed at the casual practitioner, and images of yoga consistent with the popular, mainstream imagination. Malcolm Hamilton (Hamilton 2000: 194) considers commercial Mind-Body-Spirit

events to be “a central pillar of the plausibility structure of the alternative and New Age subculture”, whilst my data demonstrated a common and intense antipathy on the part of contemporary alternative yoga practitioners to such events. As a number of commentators have stated, the semiotics of transnational yoga brands and global meditational schools are employed to market health-related products from corporate mindfulness to diet food (Carrette and King 2013: 16; Sanders and Mouyis 2010). But once again, there is a clear and stark difference between yoga imagery as conceived by marketing executives and used to sell yoghurt, and yoga as a living religious practice. This thesis, as an evocative and in-depth portrait of one subculture within a much less visible aspect of contemporary yoga culture, seeks to clarify that difference.

Therefore, while the literature on alternative religious subcultures is useful for confirming a history of countercultural engagements with yoga in Britain, and the persistence of key countercultural themes such as radical politics and henotheistic attitudes that are found in British post-lineage yoga, this thesis addresses a significant lack of examinations of the lived experience of such practitioners, their intentions, and offers a much more nuanced examination of relationships to authority and commercialism. My participants inherit the counterculture’s ambivalent relationships to providing the “consuming delights” of “postmodern consumer culture” first described by Paul Heelas (Heelas 1993: 110). Heelas also describes differing levels of engagement with the New Age in ways that Chapter 8 of this thesis will echo (Heelas 2009: 64). Yet whilst Heelas’ notion of ‘yearning’ in comparison to more common metaphors of seekership (Warburg 2001: 92) may hint at a more intimate and visceral religious experience, once again, his research describes the actual activities of the New Age in vague and general terms (Heelas 2012: 510). Nonetheless, this literature provides useful theoretical background in its criticism of the commonly held idea that contemporary British culture has been subject to increasing secularisation.

Ethnographies of the New Age and new religious communities have been common testing grounds for the idea that we may never have been as modern (Latour and Porter 1993), or as disenchanted (Bennett 2001; Holloway 2006; Partridge 2005) as earlier cultural commentators have claimed. Theories of religious enchantment and re-enchantment (Harvey and Vincett 2012: 160) create the space “for religious, spiritual, or other-worldly experience to be recognized as a legitimate form of knowledge of the world” (Olson et al. 2013: 1424). They do so often by turning attention to embodied experiences. Such experiences are at the heart of this thesis, and I extrapolate from this body of work on enchantment to examine in detail

processes of “insertion, assertion, and coproduction of space and the religious subject” (Olson et al. 2013: 1425).

However, this thesis achieves more than adding evidence to general theories about enchantment, the evolution of the New Age, or contemporary structures that inherit the ‘cultic milieu’. The communities of this research do not come together in groups according to any such etic categorisations. They choose affiliative networks according to the supportive culture surrounding the practice of post-lineage yoga: through specifically negotiated communal activities of service and devotion, movement and stillness. As I demonstrate, at times they deliberately separate their activities from the wider counterculture, particularly more hedonistic spaces (Taylor 2001: 228). Graham Harvey identifies a common concern of new religious groups to be the proving of legitimacy through ritual practice (Harvey 2012: 98). In response, my research sets out to demonstrate the intimate dependency of practice and ethics, identity and community, in the practices of emerging religious subcultures. As he says, “To do ritual is to be a member of a group. To be a member is to be shaped by the doing of ritual” (Harvey 2012: 110). Thus, the most effective, and yet uncommon research population for understanding alternative, cross-lineage and countercultural engagements with yoga is how practitioners choose to group themselves. That is what this thesis sets out to demonstrate.

## Using historical research to contextualise the contemporary picture

Mark Singleton and Jean Byrne (2008) address some of the above omissions in the record of historical and contemporary yoga in their collection of yoga studies scholarship. Whilst admitting the partial nature of what is offered, it has a clear focus on authenticity, transmission and lived practice, with a nod to recent practitioner scholars. And in Singleton (2010) we find the most comprehensive account of the journey from the pre-modern to early modern developments of yogic practice. Its main focus is the socio-cultural background and motivations of the key figures of Krishnamacharya, Iyengar, Sivananda, Jois and other originators of modern yoga. And originators it shows them to be: reclaiming *hathayoga* from its decadent associations and reforming the indigenous practice with reference to such diverse sources as the YMCA, Nature Cure, therapeutic gymnastics, callisthenics and body building. Adding to this picture, a body of work by Joseph Alter (2005, 2006, 2012) describes the processes by which the practices thus recovered or discovered were wedded to claims of

ancient Hindu authenticity in the service of Indian independence and post-colonial nationalism.

Taken together, this historical research covers a significant period, a renaissance of practice in which the modern, transnational yoga body, evolves from being entextualised, ritualised and complex, to naturalist, visible, and understandable. As a result, it sets this and any research into contemporary practice in much needed context. Singleton's *Yoga Body* was also one of the first works to include the women involved in that renaissance, whose journeys often mirror those of the participants in my research. Yet significantly for this project, there is no inclusion, understandably, of more recent trends in proliferation, commercialisation, and Hindu nationalism, nor of the kinds of less well-known schools, lineages and inter-lineage networks that this research profiles.

Suzanne Newcombe (2005; 2017) has spent over a decade researching yoga's more recent development in India and Europe, and its relationship to the practice of *āyurveda*, a collection of Indic health practices that evolved alongside yoga, and continue to influence yoga therapeutic discourse. The work of Gwilym Beckerlegge (2000, 2015) and other modern Hindu Studies specialists add additional nuance to scholarly examinations of Indian politics. Other researchers investigate the relationship between yoga and the Indian diaspora, both within the academy (Black 2016; Berila, Klein, and Roberts 2016), and also by independent writers (Barkati 2015). Beatrix Hauser (2013c) and Andrea Jain (2012, 2014a), are among many researchers considering contemporary practice in more detail. All this research added greatly to my understanding of the currents of interpersonal power at play in contemporary yoga culture, and provided insight into some themes that this thesis explores further, particularly the interrelationships between political engagement and community service, and the diverse elemental typologies that help to structure subcultural epistemologies.

During the writing of this thesis, Singleton co-authored with James Mallinson a second key historical text: *Roots of Yoga* (Mallinson and Singleton 2017). This major research output of the Hatha Yoga Project attempts to make sense of a breath-taking diversity of pre-modern source texts, dividing them into categories familiar to any serious yoga student, such as Posture, Breath-control and the Yogic Body. It provides situating context in particular for understanding the extent to which contemporary yoga is a continuation with, and departure from, its historical antecedents. But more than that, both *Roots of Yoga* and Singleton's *Yoga Body* (2010) are now included on numerous yoga teacher training syllabi. They join an increasing number of books aimed at yoga teachers and practitioners which tackle different aspects of yoga history (Goldberg 2016a; Goldberg 2016b) and present the latest research. Together they

reveal to teacher-practitioners themselves that the roots of this transnational practice are diverse, fragmented and heavily blended. This literature directly contributes to the crisis in authority developing in contemporary yoga culture.

While yoga practitioners may differ on the validity they accord to this new information, few yoga teachers are ignorant of the debates it is provoking within transnational yoga culture, and some are re-narrating their own yoga origin stories in response. Acknowledging that what is considered to be traditional practice might involve significant innovation in the modern era has led to the search for new foundations for an authentic practice, led by British voices such as Peter Blackaby (2018a) and Uma Dinsmore-Tuli (2013b), but echoed by writers and scholars like Matthew Remski (2012) in Canada, and Carol Horton in the US. There is a wider “hunger in the yoga community for writing about yoga that is critical, challenging, political, and relevant to life in the 21st century” (Horton and Harvey 2012: 181). In return, this thesis considers the impact of such evolving negotiations with scholarship on yoga subcultures, and seeks to update our understanding of contemporary yoga relationships with the authority represented by experts of all kinds.

## The impact of existing research upon yoga culture itself

As Hugh Urban (2000: 303) has noted, the use of modern commentary on ancient text and practice as a basis for modern religious authority is widespread in schools of yoga today (for examples see Brooks 2011; Devi 2010). Works such as the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, and the *Bhagavad Gītā* are seen as both part of, and productive of, a canon of authoritative commentary on practice. Appeals to foundational tradition have been used to justify numerous radical transformations in yogic practice, such as Pattabhi Jois’ claim that his world-famous **Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga** sequence was based on the *Yoga Karunta* manuscript, and Douglas Brook’s (2011) mining of Kashmir Shaivist texts to create a Tantra-inspired yoga philosophy more compatible with doctrines of abundance than asceticism (Williamson 2013: 219).

But from the turn of the twentieth century, yoga teachers increasingly leaned on biomedicine as a second pillar of authority to complement the received perception of yoga as a practice with ancient origins. Contemporary teachers are expected to be a living embodiment of the widespread belief in the health benefits of modern postural yoga (Langford 2004: 229). And yet, injury in yoga, both acute and chronic, physical and psychological, does occur. As suggested by the popularity of texts such as Broad (2012) among yoga teachers, debates about safety, and thus the science of yoga biomechanics, are increasingly common within yoga

culture, especially yoga teacher-related social media. At the same time, this “more rationalist approach, larded with biomedical jargon and devoid of [...] poetic paradox, may never capture the hearts of truly devotional practitioners” (Remski 2015b).

There appears to be a strong tendency for the yoga community to share and discuss historical, metaphysical and scientific works that confirm the reader’s personal bias. But within contemporary yoga culture as a whole, the validity of both metaphysical and scientific discourses continues to be debated. In return, Stuart Sarbacker (2014) and Alter (2005) both examine the resulting tension between the numinous and cessative aims, and magical and scientific epistemologies of modern postural yoga. The productive tension between competing epistemologies is evident within my own research population.

This complex cross-fertilisation of scholarly and practitioner, scientific and cultural theories is well-established within yoga communities. “Yoga reoriented is new theory with old practice” (Singleton and Byrne 2008: 71). But modern yoga is also arguably new practice with radical reinterpretations of even older theory. Within the neo-Vedāntic modernist yoga renaissance (Singleton 2013: 38), echoes of the medieval Tantric roots of *hathayoga* as counter-caste, embodied alchemy can be seen in a number of practitioner texts. The effects can be seen in texts written by my participants, such as Dinsmore-Tuli (2013b) and Gladwell and Wender (2014).

## The relationship between tradition, radicalism and pedagogical power in yoga

Within the research, some respondents have used the term ‘radical’ to describe this culture. It implies both innovation and transformation from a perceived cultural convention. As such, it is always a relational term, whose meaning is inferred from its conventional opposite.

Etymologically, it also contains a sense of the foundational, or rooted. As is common within religious movements, yoga hagiographies and new commentaries on ancient texts continually reframe and (re)invent traditional narratives (Glassie 1995: 399) to redraw the foundations of the practice. Rather than judging the merit of claims of authenticity, a more useful perspective considers authenticity as a quality that both confers and recognises asymmetries of power within interpersonal relationships (Pratt 1992:7 in Kraft 2002: 162).

Yoga practice is both holistic in its sphere of effect, and highly interoceptive in its results. The association of even the most physical forms of practice with psychological and spiritual benefit renders its mastery to an extent unfalsifiable. Put simply, *enlightenment can only be*

*recognised by those who have achieved it.* As a result, the categories of ‘true’ and ‘false’ teacher are endlessly contested. On the other hand, researching more unusual and idiosyncratic yoga case studies affords the possibility of momentarily escaping the dominant debates about which gurus, and thus which lineages and practices are more authentic than others (Satlow 2011:135, in Newcombe 2016).

My starting hypothesis is that the post-lineage yoga of my thesis is not, in fact, a radical departure from established yoga philosophy and practice. These teacher-practitioners sit, often consciously within an ideological heritage, rather than institutional lineage of nature-honouring, materially embodied practitioners engaged in the pursuit of social justice (for examples see Dinsmore-Tuli and Harrison 2015; Walker 2012). These teachers and writers inspired each other as well as communities of similar interests, and can be considered a shared heritage, and in some cases even a religious “chain of memory” (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 123). It includes WB Yeats (1938) and Aleister Crowley, who authored “a textbook on the eight-step yoga path [...] in 1913” (Melton 1990: 503, in Singleton 2010: 66). Less often remembered within this heritage are key female figures such as the afore-mentioned Indra Devi but also Annie Besant (Goldberg 2016b), Sister Nivedita (Reymond 1985), and more recent figures such as Vanda Scaravelli (1991). And whilst this is not yet evidenced within yoga studies scholarship specifically, this heritage is a coherent chain of ideas that has been a significant source of inspiration within countercultural yoga subcultures for well over a century, from the beginnings of Theosophy onward (Chryssides 2012: 249). As Walter Harding writes:

When Gandhi later settled in South Africa to give legal aid to Indian laborers suffering under segregation laws, he adopted Thoreau's *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* as a manual of arms in his nonviolent fight for freedom (Harding 2006: 7).

A number of my participants reference the life stories, poetry and wisdom of such radical figures as Mahatma Gandhi, Lalla Ded (Ded and Hoskote 2013), and above all Henry David Thoreau, as often as they do the traditional yoga citations from Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* or the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Thoreau, and his place within New England Transcendentalism, had already set the stage for the reception of Swami Vivekananda in America in 1893 (Walker 2012: 12), who for his own time would have been perceived as a radical innovator. Thoreau's love of Hindu philosophy is well known, and he was called the ‘first American *yogī*’, although this may at the time have been a synonym for Indian-inspired (Killingley 2013: 26). Thoreau's concerns were a reverent return to Nature, social justice reform, universal truth, and ancient philosophy. He has inspired the American civil rights movement, beat generation, hippies and the environmental movement to this day (Myerson 2006). For Len Gougeon “a concern with

reform of all types – personal, social, religious, and so on – permeates his published works” (Myerson 2006: 194).

Just as this is an understudied contemporary phenomenon, the wealth of history it inherits is also scant within the academic record of yoga. Notable exceptions include work by Newcombe (2013) on the early modern cross-fertilisation between yoga and the European occult. And Urban (2004) connects neo-pagan and New Age re-imaginings of Tantric practices to a long history of occult interest in yoga. However, between the Tantric Sex websites and online Sanskrit seminars on Kashmir Shaivism that Urban takes as his sources, there is a world of nuance that he often elides.

Thoreau is also an early model for the majority of my participants who take radical inspiration from yogic philosophy and practice, whilst rejecting the more patriarchal aspects of yogic institutions. His own physical practice consisted of simply walking, and far from being a renunciate he wrote: “We need pray for no higher heaven than the pure senses can furnish, a purely sensuous life” (Thoreau 2003). As Charlene Spretnak writes:

the Levelers, Diggers, Muggletonians, Familists, Behmenists, Fifth Monarchy Men, Ranters, and Seekers were [also] associated with beliefs that God is present in everything in nature (panentheism), that matter is alive, that change occurs through internal dynamics rather than a rearrangement of parts, and that any individual can have direct experience of the divine (2012: 133).

Movements of resistance to “the mechanistic, atomistic worldview of modernity” (2012: 133) recur, sharing a framework of values based on ecological, spiritual, material, and bodily concerns, negotiated as human and more than human commons. The work of Remski (2015e), Dinsmore-Tuli (2013b), and many of their practitioner-scholar colleagues, is often written as an explicit attempt at politico-social contextualisations of yoga. To this day, when radical reform movements seek practices and inspirations to build a capacity for awe, resilience and hope, they, like Gandhi and Thoreau, often turn to yoga and meditation (for examples see Rowe 2015; White 2016).

In very generalised terms, the modern postural yoga renaissance adapted the self-mortifying asceticism and supernatural rewards of medieval *hathayoga* in the service of purifying the mind, body and spirit for social harmony and divine and material reward. But in the textual record there is an alternative history in which yoga philosophy and practice appears to be employed by some, at various points in time, as a practice of re-embodiment for politico-social reform and personal healing and reconciliation with the natural world. Remski (2014d) claims



we are now seeing the end of the modernist yoga project that De Michelis' categorisation and Singleton's historical analysis so beautifully delineates, with the recent deaths of its last gurus, and the rising reclamation of yoga by its practitioners, especially women.

My research asks: are we ignoring repeated efforts at the re-enchantment of bodies through unorthodox, community-based forms of post-lineage yoga as a response to modernity and commercialisation? As such, it has been useful to engage meaningfully with scholars of lived and vernacular religion such as Robert Howard (2013), Robert Orsi (2013) and Leonard Primiano (1995) and their attempts to demonstrate the importance of the sort of everyday, non-institutional forms of religious activity that a long-term daily yoga practice can exemplify. Of equal usefulness in this research has been Courtney Bender's examination of practice theories (2012) and Thomas Tweed's detailed theories concerning the forces of 'dwelling' and 'crossing', not just in the flow of religious practices from place to place and culture to culture, but indeed, in the development of theory itself: as "theories are simultaneously proposals for a journey, representations of a journey, and the journey itself" (Tweed 2006: 9)

In fact, with few exceptions, such as Lea, Philo, and Cadman (2016), very rarely has the vernacular process of teaching yoga to others been discussed in any systematic manner. Scholarly investigation of the processes of yogic transmission are often confined to texts and images, such as Bühnemann (2007). Aside from a long history of textual manuals for specific audiences (Birch 2016), yoga has been taught, as far as we can know, in a range of very different ways: in the one-to-one, even live-in intimacy of the *guru-śiṣya* relationship; in large, institutionalised ashrams; and more recently in secularised, consumer settings, and through various multimedia channels.

When academics of contemporary yoga confine their investigations of modern yoga culture to its most ubiquitous and commercially successful expressions, the common conclusion, as asserted by many, including Carrette and King (2013) and challenged by Jain (2014a), is that modern yoga *practitioners* have little more than a shallow comprehension of their own practice. But in fact, within transnational yoga culture, claims to historical precedence, metaphysical and scientific epistemologies, and the ethics of its most well-known teaching structures are all being tested on an unprecedented scale, and far from remaining ignorant of this process, as I aim to show, informal yoga *teacher* networks are evolving in response.

Participants in my research are often engaged in post-lineage, peer networks of sharing practice in reaction to their own experiences of yoga pedagogical structures. A number have weathered some form of scandal or loss of trust in the lineages that trained them. Within Religious Studies, whilst the study of new religious movements has investigated a number of

such scandals, commentaries on the development of modern yoga practice are often silent on the troubled history of the guru system, although a small number of projects are currently underway to address this. Without explanation, *Gurus of Modern Yoga* states: “Abuses by gurus are not generally the focus of the chapters in this book” (Singleton and Goldberg 2013a: 8). More common still are scholarly responses to guru abuses that call for yogic transmission to more closely model traditional discipleship, and in so doing anchor yoga to its ‘original’ purpose, such as Liberman (2008) and Burger (2006).

In contrast, there is a strand of exposé literature within sociological studies of yoga communities, documenting and analysing the rising number of accounts of misconduct by gurus of yoga. McKean (1996) is just one example of many texts examining the social and political power wielded within the guru system (see also Storr 1997; Kramer and Alstad 2012). For Singleton and Goldberg, “The rejection of gurus’ authority on moral and rational grounds also has a strong history within modern India” (2013a: 8), but many like Maya Burger (2006) and others, place the blame for yoga’s commercialisation on the side of yoga’s reception in Anglo-American and European culture, with little critical analysis of any role gurus might play themselves in this process, or of power dynamics in the system which produces them. The separation of yogic history into ancient Eastern origins and modern Western re-imaginings seems a simplistic polarisation questioned by Singleton’s own work (2010), and both historical and recent scandals within lineage systems (Falk 2009; Jain 2012; Pankhania and Hargreaves 2017). What is reframed in this concept of the corrupted Eastern ascetic is often the long-term sexual and spiritual abuse of (mostly female) disciples and their children by (mostly male) authority figures who claimed unerring moral purity and absolute power over their followers’ daily living and spiritual development through infinite reincarnations. These are not minor social transgressions in the face of unaccustomed temptation (Remski 2014a).

As Geoffrey Falk’s lurid, but meticulously researched book concludes:

Nor is the problem simply with ‘naïve Westerners’ following guru-figures who would not be taken seriously in the ‘spiritual East,’ as is sometimes wrongly suggested. For, if there is such a thing as a ‘genuine guru,’ who would ever have doubted that Vivekananda, Trungpa, Muktananda or Yogananda would qualify as such? (2009: 422).

Methods of transmission and concentrations of authority continue to matter deeply. The detail of guru scandals and the ways in which lineage is structured to protect power is not the main focus of this research either. Yet post-lineage yoga teaching is evolving in a context where systematic accusations of improper conduct regularly emerge against teachers in many traditions.

In considering teaching methodologies and hierarchies the work of such theorists as Paulo Freire (1996) and bell hooks (1994) is essential to understanding the flows of power and resistance embedded in pedagogical methods. Most useful of all for this research however has been Etienne Wenger's (1999) description of "communities of practice" in considering interpersonal connections between yoga teachers, especially in comparison with hooks' own discussions of the "beloved community" (Brosi 2012).

As most of this body of research is specialised knowledge even among educators, we might assume that yoga teachers and community leaders are largely ignorant of these various theories and models. Given that, it is interesting to see how far they are evident in practice. Moving from the interpersonal processes of transmission to the network structures that support them, I have drawn further models for testing against the evidence from a number of theorists examining social networks. Andreas Wittel (2001) discusses the differences in functioning between open and closed social networks in a way that is highly applicable to the differences between institutionalised and post-lineage knowledge systems. Jimi Adams (2013) outlines a number of possible methods of inquiry for further discussion in my Methodology chapter. Of particular help in understanding the information sharing and flattened hierarchies of post-lineage yoga is the work of theorists examining rhizomatic learning structures, such as Howard (2013) and Lionel and Le Grange (2011), with reference to original theory by Deleuze and Guattari (2002).

## The impact of structuralism and phenomenology on scholarly understandings of yoga

Manuel Vásquez writes that "The academic study of religion was the result of the convergence of German Idealism, Protestant Pietism, and the Husserlian (Cartesian and Kantian) temptation of transcendence" (Vásquez 2011: 88). This resulted in a

widespread tendency in religious studies to treat inner subjective states as autonomous and to see 'external' practices, institutions, and objects (including the body as both creative actor and constructed artifact) as derivative manifestations of those states (Harvey 2012: 90).

This contributes significantly to the division in Yoga Studies referenced above, between meditational practices that have been considered to be inherently religious, and physical practices that are still considered to be inherently more secular. This is an assumption often shared in emic Anglophone literature. Yet as Klas Nevrein writes,

taking bodily experience into account is essential to the study of contemporary yoga, especially when attempting to understand the effects of yoga practice and to explain its increasing popularity (2008: 119).

Academic books and articles that do not invoke this problematic legacy in the scholarship of religion are now increasingly rare. But research into yoga still frequently omits the obvious fact that not only *āsana*, but *mantra*, *prāṇāyāma*, *mudrā* and even meditation are practices that are experienced by bodies. This thesis is part of a more recent scholarly trend in the Humanities to revalorise physical experiences and lived religious practices.

Paul Johnson (2002b) outlines the uses to which bodily experience is now put within Religious Studies: as an attempt to resist the premature reduction of practice to theory; and as a lens to analyse socio-historical influences on specific embodied forms. The body is either, after Michel Foucault, a site of resistance and power, or, after Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a form of unstructured consciousness. This division between structuralist and phenomenological approaches has been common. Structuralist theorists often draw on Foucault's theories of how state and cultural power are inscribed in bodies as "biopower" (Collingsworth 2014; Coleman and Grove 2009), and Pierre Bourdieu's theories of the unconsciously-held "habitus" of everyday actions (Petrzela 2016; Sewell 1992). Sander Gilman (2014) is one of few researchers to begin to trace the history of biopower in the kind of postural training familiar from the early development of modern yoga.

Phenomenologically-inclined researchers of yoga such as Nevrin (2008) most often trace their origins to the work of Merleau-Ponty. They focus on the micro-dynamics of interoception and **proprioception**, or awareness of the body relative to the environment, following Merleau-Ponty's defining concept of human endeavour as a search for 'maximal grip'. The resulting analyses tend more to the intrapersonal than cultural or societal in scale. But as the study of religious, and indeed bodily practice becomes more interdisciplinary, more researchers such as Omar Lizardo (2004) are, like Johnson, combining their approaches. Johnson finds middle ground between structuralism and phenomenology in "neither the body constructed in discourse nor the body of consciousness, but rather the productive and produced body" (2002b: 172). In the power relations and translation issues between researcher and researched, he asks: "Do we give priority to the *lived body* in the immediacy and agency of lived experience (insofar as that is possible), or do we aim to record body as it is *signified* and *structured*?" (Johnson 2002b: 181).

The interoceptive and kinesthetic experiences of bodies form the core of my research data, but so do the interpersonal structures and processes that support the transmission of such

experiences. As a result, my methodology stays close to the lived experience of my participants, and uses a combination of phenomenological and structuralist approaches to analyse them. The work of Elizabeth Behnke (1997) on the existence of, and resistance to, the ‘ghost gestures’ of embedded habit, and the evocative descriptions of the ‘fluent bodies’ of *āyurveda* by Jean Langford (2004) are of significant help in that attempt.

Among such yoga scholars that address bodily experience directly, the most problematic and commonly unsubstantiated assumption is that the body is a neutral and universal point of reference, as in Morley (2008) and Langølen (2012). More nuanced analysis is found in Leledaki and Brown (2009), providing a useful methodological model to follow, in which a long-term history of bodily practice is deliberately sampled, from a number of traditions whose experiences are not assumed to be universal.

And some investigation into more socially transgressive, less universalised aspects of bodily experience can be found in research into the pre-modern history of yoga. This provides some interesting typologies and models to extrapolate from, but little of methodological relevance to contemporary study. In this regard, David Gordon White’s extensive body of work (1984, 2011) as well as more recent work by scholars associated with the Hatha Yoga and AyurYoga Projects helps clarify more of the historical influences behind contemporary associations and metaphors used in the practice (Westoby 2018; Wujastyk 2017). The yoga of my fieldwork borrows heavily from both Tantric and Ayurvedic theory, making common reference to the substances or processes of “the three bodily *doṣa* (often translated as humors) – *vāta*, *pitta*, and *kapha*” (Langford 2004: 4). Like the Ayurvedic body as Langford describes it, this is a yogic body attuned to a seasonally changing ecology, as experiential and metaphysical as it is rational.

## On the specificity or universality of gendered bodies

The majority of yoga practitioners today are women, as are most of my participants. Yet yoga is a practice that for most of its history excluded women, considering them as objects and catalysts for practice rather than subjects (Black 2012: 138 in Westoby 2018). My research centres on bodily practices that are marked by gender. Twentieth and twenty-first century feminist theories of bodies and power are therefore of obvious relevance.

Feminist scholars of the body produce both structuralist and phenomenological theory. Among the former, for Judith Butler (1993) the very socio-political rules that govern modern bodily experience are the source of the self-actualising power that can be unleashed in their transgression. She asks:

What is excluded from the body for the body to form? And how does that exclusion haunt that boundary as an internal ghost of sorts (...)? To what extent is the body surface the dissimulated effect of that loss? (Butler 1993: 65).

For Butler as for Luce Irigaray (Halsema 2006: 155), the answer is an irreverent mimicry of established norms. It is possible that contemporary female practitioners are repurposing and reframing yoga in similar ways (Butler 1993: 45). But the stakes are high: ““My question is this: How much does it cost the subject to be able to tell the truth about itself?”” (Foucault in Butler 1993: 94). This enduring question haunts later chapters of this thesis, as it does the work of Foucault, Butler, and others.

However, this thesis also concerns itself with the many ways that identity is created by, rather than performed through, movement. And although Butler returns repeatedly to clarify her central concept of performativity and its difference from ideas of performance, she never quite escapes the problematic notion that bodies, our experiences of them, and thus our most visceral sense of identity, are determined by cultural practice. Mind, thus, maintains its grip over matter, rather than, for other theorists, co-creating each other (Sheets-Johnstone 2007: 297). In contrast, analysing the data of this thesis begins from the standpoint that mind and matter are inseparable and interdependent.

More recent collections of feminist scholarship on the body, such as that edited by Deborah Orr (2006) provide us with a wide field of responses to these and other key Anglophone and Francophone feminist theorists. Yet the reality of material existence that is claimed to be the focus of such theory is strangely missing from this, and many other collections. The tendency is to confine both analysis and data almost entirely to philosophical debate. Thus, to appropriate Annemie Halsema’s words: “there prevails some nondiscursive rest, a residue, something outside of culture, which is bodily” (2006: 152).

Usefully for this research, Irigaray herself wrote a monograph on yoga and the female body. Speaking as a practitioner, in it she writes:

The desire to remain a woman and to spiritually become a woman found in the practice of yoga and the reading of certain ancient texts of this tradition an aid for interpreting my more patriarchal tradition and for reviving a repressed culture that better suits me (Irigaray and Pluhacek 2002: 55).

However, for my participants, yoga is not a neutral resource as for Irigaray. Her concern is “the admission of women into the latest and most masculine tradition of yoga” (Irigaray and Pluhacek 2002: 69-70), in which “it is supposed to be advisable not to think” (Irigaray and

Pluhacek 2002: 66). In this, and elsewhere, Irigaray's analysis tends to the universal in describing both race and gender. Much feminist discourse on the body has been equally essentialist, heteronormative and colour-blind in turn (Butler 1993: 181). This becomes increasingly relevant when analysing practices, like yoga, that are marked by a complex history of colonialism and nationalism, and engaged in by a diversity of bodies of all kinds. In response, Jessica Cadwallader notes, the most recent

contemporary feminist philosophies of the body have become more concerned with the detail of the lived experiences of difference than with focusing on the exclusory logics that shape philosophy (Cadwallader 2011: 176)

Nonetheless and as a result, such writers tend to the specific and particular, making it difficult to extrapolate their analyses beyond the scope of their research.

There are examples of feminist writers who use bodily experience as the generative ground of theory itself. Hélène Cixous' career has been a phenomenological experiment in new ways of writing theory, and particularly 'une écriture féminine'. *Le Rire de la Méduse* (Cixous 1976) is a call to arms for bodily derived mystical experience to form a new heart of philosophical enquiry. Although Cixous' style is largely inimitable, her attention to the detail of lived experience is a useful model in analysing the lived experience of both researcher and participant in new and more visceral ways.

Many useful texts for this thesis involved similar attempts to broaden the language we use to describe lived experience. Tim Ingold's writing also includes significant experimentation in how we can write and think about bodies and their ecology. And post-lineage yoga as a term does not define a complex-structure but rather a complex-process metaphor, which prioritises "the practice of knowing over the property of knowledge" (Ingold 2011: 159). In all, Ingold and Cixous both set a high standard not just for writing about embodiment, but for the kind of mindful bodily emplacement of researcher in the field I am aiming for.

However, consistent with the tendency described above, Cixous' writing in particular comes very close to essentialising both black and female experiences of the body. Despite this her work is unquestionably remarkable in scope and execution. Another well-known text, simply titled *La* ('the feminine' or 'there'), contains a description of (gendered) authority within religious transmission that is reminiscent of Kramer and Alstad's (2012) own theories on yogic authority structures. "It has to be said that there was always one god or other, lying in ambush at the right place, with his reassuring look of an enigma personified" (Cixous and Sellers 1994: 62).

Other writers are also aware of the power of bodily knowing to transgress the neat narratives of both religion and academia with sensory magic (Abram 2012: ix). One article by Chantale Lussier-Ley shows the limitations of this kind of scholarship. She claims that “such rich, subjectively lived experiences can enhance our understanding of multidimensional, complex, social phenomena (*sic*) like embodiment” (Lussier-Ley 2010: 211). Yet her self-study account seems self-absorbed and self-specific, and it is difficult to see how it informs wider scholarly understanding, other than as a useful warning against solipsism for all researchers of lived experiences with some personal involvement in the data, like myself.

## Understanding the role of movement in meaning making and identity

In bridging the gap between scientific and cultural, experiential and structural understandings of lived religious practice, it is useful to reach beyond the study of yoga within Religious Studies. Research into a number of yoga and meditation practices, such as Hayes (2014) and Mehling et al. (2011) has drawn on understandings from neuroscience, although mostly to confirm the effects of the practice on health.

Cognitive philosophy pays much closer consideration to the detail of lived experience beyond medical concerns. Recent additions to this field that are useful in examining the intentions and experiences of my participants emerge from scientific explorations of the neurobiology of affect, movement and perception. Margaret Wilson reviews the field and concludes that the most important finding is that least referenced or understood: “**sensorimotor** simulations of external situations [involving both sensory and motor activity] are in fact widely implicated in human cognition” (Wilson 2002: 633). This helped to contextualise an early hypothesis on my part: that the ecologies of post-lineage yoga are integral to its practice. Post-lineage practice, as I will show, is a process of meaning-making in which internal and external, imagined and actual landscapes are intimately involved.

And yet what is absent from most research into cognition is an awareness of bodies existing in real world relationships, as in Fiori (2014). Minds are assumed to think, and bodies move, in logical, reproducible ways, uninterrupted by unexpected relational intrusion. Wim Pouw et al. (2014) go some way to address this in a study on the links between cognition and communicative gestures. And Natalie Depraz (2008) and Lauri Nummenmaa et al. (2014) both take an interdisciplinary approach in connecting human biology to the cultural expression of shared emotions. All of these contain findings of use in understanding possible links between the intentions and results of yoga as a shared movement culture.



Given that the heart of this research concerns itself with group experiences, more relevant still to this thesis is a strand of research into contagious aspects of human emotional expression. Nils Bubandt and Rane Willerslev (2015), as well as a wealth of work by Frans de Waal and collaborators (2002; 2008, 2012), make a clear link between **mimesis** or mimicked movement, and empathy, cautioning that empathy itself can be a form of power over others. Sebastian Schuler (2011) writes about similar processes in group ritual movement. This thesis will go on to examine carefully what else, including Behnke's 'ghost gestures', might be transmitted during the teaching of bodily movement as yoga practice (Barsalou et al. 2005).

The practice in question, clearly, is sensory, **kinetic** (pertaining to movement), relational and reflexive. The field of Dance Studies provides much useful theory on similar practices and their relation to spirituality or religion. Kimerer LaMothe (2008) asks:

what kind of movements does belief in a given doctrine or participation in a given community require? What does the making of such movements create in the individuals and communities who perform them? What networks of relationships emerge through the performance or enactment? (LaMothe 2008: 588).

These are useful questions for this project to consider, although in LaMothe's work the accompanying assumption that a dancer embodies on behalf of the passive but empathetic audience remains largely unexamined. In contrast Patrick Johnson turns to the consideration of power in performing bodies, in response to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's now canonical question, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (2008: 172).

There are a few dance theorists who have made remarkable cross-disciplinary attempts to engage with neuroscientific theories. Kelly Mullan (2014) delivers a thorough overview of the history of Western somatic practices in attempting a synthesis of the cognitive and expressive theory generated by its practitioners that is helpful to compare with my own respondents' statements during teaching.

The most useful insights for understanding how movement makes meaning are found in the work of Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2012), who reviews studies of infant development and animal behaviour alongside human cognitive experiments to show that movement is not merely produced by cognition, but constitutive of it. In Sheets-Johnstone (2009), she replaces the term embodiment, and its implication that there can be a self that is un-embodied, with the term animation. Graham Harvey's new animism (2006) is the cultural assumption of the sacred aliveness of all things in relationship. Similarly Sheets-Johnstone's animation is in part the philosophical and scientific foundation for that relational aliveness, at least among animate

beings who share “our natural disposition to be moved to move, and in our experiencing other animate beings moving and being moved to move” (Sheets-Johnstone 2012: 394).

Constitutions and understandings of the sacred, alive, and animate are common aims of religious practice. As Sheets-Johnstone says,

movement offers us the possibility not only of formulating an epistemology true to the truths of experience, but of articulating a metaphysics true to the dynamic nature of the world and to the foundationally animated nature of life (2011: xix).

This is not functional movement, but mindful animation. Such movement is created through relationship, in the immediate ecology of the practice. Movement can display meaning, in purely performative terms. It can also express or embody meaning. But the axis of my research is movement as constitutive of meaning itself: being and becoming through movement. This thesis borrows from a range of disciplinary standpoints, including the sensory depth of dance theory and a number of Sheets-Johnstone’s own theoretical insights from neuroscience, to outline the processes and intentions of identity formation and reformation embedded within the practice. In chapters 7 and 9 in particular, I will combine that with a deeper awareness of the need for multiple and diverse bodies within the research than is often shown, as well as an examination of the inherent role power of those who prescribe movement, and those who move on behalf of others.

## The place of this thesis within the study of yoga and religion

In order to carefully situate the research, this review has referenced significant strands in previous examinations of yoga, bodies, communities and religion, and noted a number of significant issues with the current literature. Issues with, and alternatives to the pedagogical lineage system have been drawn from sociological and community studies. An alternative inheritance of radical inspiration has been evidenced, as roots for the alternative, post-lineage yoga culture under study. I have uncovered elements of new discourses of materiality, physicality, and ecology as the foundation for the vocabularies of movement and interoception that I will need to re-purpose or re-create.

My research subject is recent developments in bodily religious practices, informed by the evolving science, anthropology and philosophy of animation and animism, within a wider than human context (Harvey 2006: 88). If many of its practitioners could be argued to be ignorant of

the detailed historiography of Indian yoga, for a century or more, they have been part of an emerging and complex tradition of their own.

As Robert Orsi writes, lived religion in all its forms, being “improvised and situational” (2003: 152), is often in conflict with, or at least in avoidance of, established religious authority and hierarchy. The academy also engages in the power relationships of religious authority and meaning. As the bodies and practices of lived religion have become legitimate subjects of theory, “religious theorizing [begins to take] the higher ground once held by belief.” (Orsi 2011: 14).

Within my analyses, I aim therefore to stay mindful of the meanings of these practices as they are experienced, and to document the internal, inter-human, inter-species and intra-ecological relationships of the practitioners themselves. Like Orsi and many others, I begin from the premise that there is much of value to be learned from the everyday rituals that people use to make meaning of their lives. After all, “the majority of the planet’s people are contending with the world as they find it in the practices of everyday religion” (Orsi 2012: 160). In turning to considerations of method, I begin in the knowledge that these everyday stories “are forever at the edge of extinction, a reality that is effectively manipulated by the powerful” (Orsi 2013: 5).

### 3. Methodology

Many studies of contemporary yoga take as their research target the majority of students that attend regular classes, such as Ding and Stamatakis (2014). Beyond discussions of the history and hagiography of dominant cultural figures such as we find in Singleton and Goldberg (2013a), it is much less common to focus on people actively responsible for yoga's ongoing cultural transmission. This research project takes as its source of data that population of people who kept practising yoga, even as they encountered fundamental challenges to the accepted authorities for practice. Beyond habit and custom, could I discover something about the practice itself that kept people coming back to the yoga mat, day in, day out, year after year?

#### Research scope

My first methodological challenge was to specify the boundaries of my research more completely. In deciding on research participants, I was interested in what people did on the yoga mat, but also why they did it, and the culture that supported them. Data would need to include the detail of motive, method, intent and practice. I had decided on a qualitative ethnographic methodology, and given the depth of detail desired, the scale would need to be tightly focused. It was not useful or practical to attempt to produce a comprehensive study of the diverse practice of contemporary yoga in the UK. My literature review had confirmed that existing studies of contemporary yoga could not provide me with a significant benchmark of both attitudes to practice and practice forms, to measure against that of my participants.

But contemporary yoga is still largely a synchronously taught practice, thus the most useful research population could be found among yoga teachers, and organisers of yoga events. I have drawn a tighter and even more useful focus by choosing subjects who were highly invested in the transmission of practice and culture beyond both established lineage and commercial brands. My research does not aim to represent yoga as it is currently understood by wider contemporary culture, but as it is lived and practised by those most invested in its ongoing evolution.

Within that population, I have identified a loose network of people, the majority of whom consider yoga to be part of their personal and professional identity. They share significant experiences of disillusionment with mainstream yoga culture, and choose to respond by coming together in non-commercial, non-institutional spaces to share yoga practice. I already knew of a few such events, and began mapping others, with the help of protocols drawn from

network research (Adams 2013: 323). I found one group of small yoga camps and festivals concentrated in the South West of England to be among the most commonly attended, and most highly valued by teachers themselves. Other similar camps and festivals exist. But these camps in particular involve a weight of history and a coherent community of people, and as a result are clearly a significant vector for post-lineage yoga culture transmission here in the UK.

In order to visualise and analyse the connections within this network, I constructed diagrams (employing analysis tools following Adams (2013: 326)). In these, I added nodes for anyone I spoke to during fieldwork, or who was named in event programme information. Most people were assigned a code number but anyone named in the thesis is also named in the diagrams. I added as many interpersonal connections as I was aware of, and created further nodes for each camp, and the most common affiliations to lineage, style, place, and so on, to include the most prominent more than human network actors, as well as the multiplicity of affiliations each person could hold. The results can be seen in Chapter 8. This is not an attempt at a complete network analysis, including all possible inter-relationships in the subculture, as even on this small a scale, such exhaustive data would be unfeasible. It is instead a largely representational sketch of some of the most connected figures and features of the network, to enable further, more ethnographic analysis of the shape of the community, its key figures, levels of engagement, and flows of information, affinity and authority.

The population I wished to research was clear, but I had not quite determined what was culturally coherent about it. The literature review had suggested a much longer and more coherent history of countercultural engagements with yoga than I had suspected. In these engagements, themes of personal or peer authority, ecological enchantment and social justice recur, again and again. I discovered that these themes were part of commonly recurring conversations in the community to be researched. Scientific research (Rhodes 2015), practitioner literature (Khouri 2016; Remski 2016b; Thompson and Gates 2014) and initial conversations also pointed to a tangled connection between yoga practice and adverse life experiences. There appeared to be multiple instances in transnational yoga culture of both marginalised and societally disenchanted groups using yoga as both an individual and interpersonal practice of wellbeing. My target population included many such people.

Post-lineage yoga in this thesis is sustained and practised by people on the outer edges of yoga culture, who have chosen or found themselves looking beyond the given orthodoxy and epistemology of yoga. I would be considering its key features as a form of cultural transmission, such as how it sustains itself and what its sources of authority are. But I would be

investigating those key features with reference to a specific and coherent subculture, here in the UK.

### Research question

Throughout this initial process of literature review, early conversations, scoping visits to sites, and defining the targeted research population, my research question and sub-questions expanded and evolved into the following:

- **Within contemporary post-lineage British yoga culture, how does the yogic body in practice change to reflect its evolving meaning, and the relationships of authority within which it is shared?**
  - *How does the ecological and community context for transmission function to support the evolution and diversity of practice?*
  - *Do describable and common typologies of the sensory and kinetic repertoire of the practice exist?*
  - *Is a common vocabulary of meanings for practice shared by key community members?*
  - *What personal and cultural aims are reached for in the ongoing and diverse evolution of practice?*
  - *What implications does the research hold for the wider and future study of yoga, bodies and religion?*

In selecting subjects for inclusion in the research, I have looked for practitioners who are actively engaged with post-lineage transmission through long term, dedicated home practice, defined as a decade or more, multiple times a week. They are established yoga teachers, yoga event crew and organisers who work within the community network. My methodology has a clear aim: to explore their lived experience of the practice, the intentions informing that practice, and the culture that supports it.

### Experimentation as a method

Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (2013: 4-5) remind us that “Methods help us to analyse reality but, at the same time, they, in part, produce the data that are to be analysed”. I had not begun my research project with a theory to be tested, but rather an anomaly to be investigated. As such, my methodological considerations were governed by an interdisciplinary

search for the most appropriate lenses to bring the subject into sharpest focus (Knott 2009: 159).

As there are no existing standards for investigating the cultural transmission of physical and ritual practice within the study of religion, this methodology is influenced by research techniques from the ethnography of movement, network theory and community development. What followed, then, was a personal exploration of method as experimentation, developing a multi-layered process in which at each point the embodied understanding of both myself and participants was tested for its ability to produce useful and robust data (Wacquant 2014: 4). I repeatedly checked that my methods were producing data that was at least coherent for the group or sub-culture as a whole, and that was good to think with. The scope of the research was investigative, allowing for sampling according to theoretical saturation, rather than the dominant or most obvious fraction (Lincoln 1999: 397).

As I aimed at an analysis of experiential practice, some form of examination of the individual practices of respondents was necessary. As I aimed also at investigating intent, meaning making and interoception, I would need to discuss that practice with my respondents. And as my overall focus was the relationship of individual practice to post-lineage culture, some form of immersive participation in that culture would be useful. Participant observation can reveal a depth of visceral experience and fully embeds the research of lived religion within its ecologies (Harvey 2013a: 219), but it privileges the voice of the researcher over the researched. As explained by Anna Davidsson Bremborg (2013), qualitative interviewing enables a depth of analysis into motivation and personal and interpersonal narratives, although it also privileges self-conscious, reflective thought over pre-verbal experience. Auto-ethnographic involvement in the practices discussed in interview could help provide a better experiential understanding. It was clear that all these methods and associated media could overlap to more effectively address the focus of the research.

I decided upon a mixed methodology of linked processes: fieldwork and participation in both personal and taught practices, recordings of the same, and finally, interviews about both the individual practices, and the camp environments. In order to enable comparison between specific individual practices, professional identities and sub-cultural processes, these different methods involved the same community, and in many cases, the same respondents. Each medium can be seen as a different lens that produces diverse data with an overlapping but non-identical scope. As the research progressed, the slippage between experience, observation, narration and transmission of practice became a way to understand some of the processes of sub-cultural evolution itself.

What follows then, is an account of my method as experimentation, testing multiple overlapping methods or lenses, and with close attention paid to the coherence of the results. This understudied area of research necessitated adapting established methods from other fields into entirely new approaches, to bring new data into view within the study of religion.

## Research as an act of service

Within the field of yogic scholarship, there are scholars who don't practise (Doniger 2013), scholars who do (Newcombe 2009), scholars whose own practice is key to their research and can be overly partisan (Langølen 2012), and scholars who are writing as much for a yogic audience as a scholarly one (Horton 2012). Each piece of research must justify its own terms of reference and ways of knowing. But as the academic field seeks to engage more openly with its researched audiences, there is an increasing tension between insider and outsider narratives that can be generative if researcher positionality is explicitly acknowledged and investigated.

Kenneth Pike (1999) coined the terms 'emic' and 'etic' to describe a spectrum of viewpoints that speak variously to the native coherence of experience, or aim for cross-cultural comparison. My aim is both emic in describing a coherent culture, and etic, in the comparison of experiences between bodies. The placing of my own, alongside participants' lived experience of yoga is both an inevitable aspect of the research, but also a deliberate response to emic-etic debates involving prominent Religious Studies scholars from Clifford Geertz (1999) to Jonathan Z. Smith (1999).

Without some pre-existing knowledge of post-lineage yoga communities, I might never have been able to identify them as a productive site for research. This kind of practitioner-academic research involves the translation and contextualisation of emic knowledge for the etic audience. But as that knowledge is ever changing, and indeed changes both researcher and researched in the process of research, reliable representation of that emic reality is always to an extent also the active production of knowledge.

Thus, being honest about my ongoing relationship to both emic and etic realities continues to be the most ethical for my subject community and the most intellectually honest stance within the academic environment. Over the course of the project, reflecting on those relationships was continually productive. Those of us (re)entering the academy in this way are among Ruth Behar's "vulnerable observers" (1997: 173), working despite "the risks in exposing oneself in an academy that continues to feel ambivalent about observers who forsake the mantle of omniscience" (Behar 1997: 12), engaging in complex processes of reconciliation between the



under-represented communities whose stories we aim to tell (Shaw 1999: 108; Orsi 2013: 5), and the power an academic position confers to “define reality for others” (Hufford 1999: 298).

My research position began in that which Graham Harvey describes as methodological guesthood: as a trusted guest who understood the most important community values and experiences, and could be relied upon to behave ethically and respectfully (Harvey 2014: 94). Methodological guesthood did not eliminate challenging questioning on my part. In the course of the fieldwork, I facilitated the occasional group discussion on authority and intent, and among my interview respondents were people who thanked me for the opportunity to clarify their own thinking about their practice.

I employed my existing connections to widen my knowledge of the sub-culture still further, reaching out to rarer and more diverse voices rather than, as Anna Gade (2013) warns, trusting to my experience of the field to provide all necessary data. This was of especial concern any time when my findings tended to neat and simple conclusions (Wolf 1999: 355). In the process, I was aiming for what Russell McCutcheon calls “methodological agnosticism” (1999b: 215-16). This entails making “the strange familiar” and “the familiar strange” (Muesse 1999: 291-92), and adopting what Amanda van Eck Duymaer van Twist (2015: 30) refers to as the position of the “trusted stranger” who defers any judgement on the diverse and individual claims of metaphysical experience so as to focus on other categories of data.

My position as a researcher has however evolved, from one of guesthood, to one of service. As I will show, the practice of community service is one that holds practical, religious and political significance for post-lineage yoga culture. It is sometimes referred to as *karmayoga* (the yoga of action), or simply *sevā*, a word that has diverse and significant meanings across modern yoga cultures (Beckerlegge 2015: 209). *Sevā* is considered to be equally and at the same time a practice of personal development and the freely-offered currency that allows post-lineage events to thrive beyond commercial constraints.

Considering my research position as one of service has provoked significant professional development on my part, and enabled this research to move beyond the most visible manifestations of contemporary yoga culture. During my participant observation I explored the camps as an average participant would, not just eating, talking, resting and practicing yoga with others, but serving the practical needs of this community in a number of capacities, by leading the occasional yoga session, helping in the kitchen and so on. This provided a much greater diversity of experiences, and facilitated a wider range of conversations with respondents. But including such acts of service that the community valued also enabled respondents to better understand my motives and reassure them that I was there to

understand rather than expose them. And balancing my obligations to both the academic research process and the stories of my respondents was easier for myself to understand when I considered the ways in which I was serving both.

Thus, my orientation as a researcher in the field evolved in its experimentation, from methodological guesthood, to methodological *sevā*. I use this new term to signify that my research continues to be offered as a service freely dedicated to both academic rigour and the unheard stories of post-lineage yoga.

## Valorising pre-existing expertise in movement

Just as considering my prior experience within the culture was essential to developing my methodology, so my status as a prior participant to yoga cannot be bracketed out, nor would it be methodologically productive to do so. To understand and manage that position better, I adapted notions from dance theory of the expert and non-expert mover, as discussed in Cole and Montero (2007: 303) and Ataria, Dor-Ziderman, and Berkovich-Ohana (2015: 134) as well as following Fiori (2014) in considering long-term practitioners whose history is foundational to their current practice. Yoga, like any other physical discipline at any significant level of commitment is an incremental learnt process. This applies to the physical competence not just to achieve the various acts of movement, posture, breath and stillness, but also to the individualised knowledge of how to vary the practice according to one's embodied form, and the depth of awareness of sensations arising within the body. Long-term dedication to practice does not guarantee the most acrobatic results, but does confer a certain grace, ease, and skilful negotiation of its lived experience (Lussier-Ley 2010: 203).

My respondents struggled to convey how some aspects of another practitioner's experience are, for them, evident from observing their physical form in ways they are not for an observer without that embodied skillset. The same shape made by a body can be recognised by other practitioners as yoga or not depending on subtle contextual clues. And any number of other activities within the cultural ecology, from walking the site to chopping vegetables, could be understood as somehow 'yogic'. Put simply, practitioners both experience and observe yoga differently to non-practitioners.

My own long experience of various interoceptive and kinesthetic practices confers a clear difference between my own, and many other academic bodies (McGuire 1990: 292). My own body, its flexibility, strength and sensitivity, is heavily implicated in the research process. I cannot pretend that it is neutral within the field. As Richard Carp writes:

Yogic knowledge [...] is the end of a long process of bodily training. [...] The anybody of the Academic body corresponds to the nowhere of Academic space. Yet the universality of academic knowledge is premised on the universality of the academic body (2001: 99).

As bell hooks reminds us, “the person who is most powerful has the privilege of denying their body” (1994: 137). And despite the recent turn to the material and ‘embodied’ in the study of religion, discussed in Dreyfus (1996), Orsi (2013) and Watts (2013), the field has not yet embraced the concept of embodied skillsets among researchers as well as respondents. Much scholarly attention is paid to the embodiment of abstract meaning, but much less to the creation and emergence of meaning as a product of bodies moving. And as McCutcheon (1999a) describes, emic status has traditionally been considered an impediment to researcher clarity within the social sciences in particular. Beyond this research project there remains much more work to be done in examining the effect of what might be called a yoga body on the research of yoga in general. In my case, the body of the researcher is significantly implicated within the research. In that, it is no different from the body of the researcher in any experiential research (Giardina and Newman 2011: 526). My research data thus emerged as a unique iteration of the phenomena it describes, negotiated in the relationship of multiple bodily presences, the ecology surrounding those bodies, and all our practice histories (Giardina and Newman 2011: 530). My body alongside the bodies of my respondents, and our shared and separate history, habits and sensory fields, was a key site for my methodological experimentation.

## Fieldwork

My fieldwork activities were informed by the notion that “it is communities and not individuals who produce knowledge” (Neitz 2013: 60). My developing awareness of the key people and events within the interpersonal network (Adams 2013: 326) had led to selecting a group of people heavily involved in organising a small number of yoga camps and festivals that are concentrated in the South West of England. Early scoping visits in the summer of 2015 confirmed that a small sample would provide a rich depth of useful data, and enable close-grained analysis of the culture as it evolved in real time. This was followed by in-depth fieldwork at all sites in 2016, and return visits to check findings in the subsequent two summers.

The three main sites frame the British summer: Colourfest, Sundara Yoga Community event, and Santosa Living Yoga and Bhakti Camp, but in 2015 and 2016, there were other visits to

such events as the IYN's Midsummer Gathering ('IYN Yoga Festival' 2015), EarthFirst ('Earth First! Summer Gathering') and the Beltane Bhakti Gathering ('UK Bhakti Gatherings' 2017). The three main sites form a unique cluster of data and a coherent network that is an example of the wider post-lineage yoga culture. Fieldwork notes overlapped with recorded onsite interviews, scans of event programmes and short snatches of video covering representative and significant cultural and movement practices, as well as tours of each site. Further interviews with event organisers were conducted after the events. Transcriptions and edited films were shared with participants for further feedback. The result was a multi-layering of dense qualitative data to be analysed in a number of synchronous and asynchronous ways (Knoblauch and Schnettler 2012: 335). But the discrete and easy nature of the recording also allowed me, as researcher, to more fully immerse myself in the process of ethnography. My tiny camera and audio recorder could be pulled out at a moment's notice, and balanced almost anywhere. At the same time, recall and notes from my ethnographic presence in each video or audio recording situation enabled me "to enhance, sometimes even correct the understanding that is derived later from the footage" (Knoblauch and Schnettler 2012: 343). The skillset necessary for the fieldwork was developed from academic disciplines of rigour, clarity and method (May 2001; Bird and Scholes 2013: 97), helpfully supported by yogic practices of self-refinement (*svādhyāya*) and empathy.

Questions for the fieldwork included applying analytical tools from Etienne Wenger's communities of practice (1999), Andreas Wittel's theories of networks (2001), Kim Knott's spatial theories (2005) and Neil Thompson's anti-oppressive models for community development (1997). Adapting from such a wide range of interdisciplinary sources provoked such useful questions as:

- How are these spaces shaped, and how do people move through them?
- How are people actively connecting to material place and each other? Is this process devotional?
- What are the common cultural references and transmission structures? How does interpersonal power flow through them?
- How can I best describe the diverse kinetic opportunities available?

## Co-practice

Fieldwork provided many examples of group practice, but it became clear that I would need to investigate practice beyond the camp ecology to approach the lived experience of individual practice, in a specific context and moment. In order to produce a manageable amount of data,

I decided on an even smaller sample drawn from well-connected figures within the subcultural network who were approximately representative of the available diversity of practice.

In an early iteration of this experimental method, I asked early respondents if they could begin a practice of yoga according to the emergent needs and practice of their day, and I would attempt to follow them, and then interview them about it. Early results were very productive. Given my prior experience of yoga, respondents spoke of sharing their practice as with a peer, knowing that despite a wide diversity in our practice histories, a shared knowledge of the general scope and repertoire was implicit. Put simply, wherever the practice was headed, I had prior familiarity with the destination.

Mimicking the respondent's practice also gave me some insight into how my body responded to the practice, if not theirs. Further reading of Taussig (1991) showed that physical mimesis can also be productive of an experience of high interpersonal attunement, which enhanced the interview process that followed it. Among others (Bubandt and Willerslev 2015; Sklar 1994), Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2012, 2016) makes a strong case for mimesis as the basis of developing empathy itself, in infant, adult non-verbal and even inter-species communication. Simply stated, we sit like others and move like others when we want to attune to their way of being. The fieldwork lens of my methodology entailed moving with over forty different yoga and movement teachers, whilst at the heart of the co-practice interviews I quietly mimicked individual practices in intimate depth. In subsequent interviews, I asked mostly open questions that allowed the respondent and myself to discuss themes emergent from the practice, such as:

- What people or events helped you get to where you are today in your practice?
- How did today's practice compare to other practices you've done recently?
- Does the practice change your relationship to what and who is around you?

When embarking on my individual case studies, I also made two specific changes from that early experimental phase. Direct, face-to-face mirroring of the respondent felt too confronting, and rather than risk my presence dominating the data, in subsequent sessions I placed myself instead just to one side and a little behind, copying rather than mirroring the respondent. A closer focus on the specific instance of practice was also enabled by playing back a recording of the practice during the interview. As the research evolved, unforeseeable challenges emerged when participants moved in ways that I could not follow, and each time I adapted the practice or abstained in a variety of ways. Most importantly, this is not the naturally occurring data between multiple subjects that is common to much video analysis (Mondada 2012: 305), but a deliberate experiment in producing data with the researcher as participant. In all these ways,

the bodily presence of both researcher and researched became assets in the data to be investigated, rather than problems to be solved (Wacquant 2014: 10).

Despite a partially shared practice repertoire and scope of aims, the circumstances of the co-practice process were unique. Yoga teachers are often mimicked by yoga students in the normal process of knowledge transmission to the group, but this is at least ostensibly in the service of the evolving student and culture. Yoga practitioners, especially teachers, might share less formal co-practice sessions on occasion, blending individual need into shared aims and a group practice. But within yoga culture, the experience of having one's individual practice shadowed by another practitioner is extremely unusual. Most respondents referred in some way to the unexpected and powerful sense of intimacy it provoked. Paraphrasing my respondent **Sivani Mata**: her usual practice involves her in relationship with her altar, and the relationship as a whole held within a wider circle of benevolent protection. In sharing her morning *pūjā* (ritual practice) with me, there was an additional presence in the form of myself as interviewer. This formed a shadow gaze to her own, multiplied by the permanence of the camera's gaze. There was, as a result, a field containing the respondent and the altar and the intimate relationship therein, created by the gaze of the researcher as witness. This multiple gaze was itself held by the gaze of the camera. For my respondent, this was also all held within the circle of divine protection or presence. The result for her was an off-centring, a feeling of being pulled slightly out of one's usual orbit, and an unprecedented level of intimacy and being witnessed.

None of my respondents experienced the intimacy of the co-practice event negatively, but I became aware of needing to respond ethically and honourably to the emotional intimacy that emerged. There is some precedent for this way of working outside of the academy. A very effective but resource-intensive therapeutic technique called Intensive Interaction, as introduced by Jefferies (2009) and reviewed by Hutchinson and Bodicoat (2015), uses physical mimesis to encourage non-verbal autistic people into social interaction, communication, and deeper relationship with care staff and families. Although the theory and practice of Intensive Interaction was, at best, tangential to the research, I became aware that my familiarity with it also informed the co-practice lens of the research.

More widely, the issues of yoga in transmission are reflected in the method. Just as the choice of media generates certain forms of practice data, so media choice privileges certain aspects of cultural transmission. And the presence of bodies in relationship to their histories, abilities and tendencies, as well as who leads movement and who follows, is a vector for interpersonal

power dynamics within the transmission of yoga culture, just as it is generative of power dynamics within the research relationship.

## Analytical frameworks

Given the lack of existing research in the area, my sample and deeply layered data would need to provide much of its own theory. Having worked with Grounded Theory in the past, I was familiar with working from the data up:

Grounded Theory can be an effective methodological choice in three circumstances: when there is little or no literature on relevantly similar cases; when existing concepts/theories seem inadequate for aspects of the material at hand; or when one wishes to explore the possibility of alternative modes of conceptualizing a case (Engler 2013: 256).

However, Grounded Theory can become pseudo-scientific and thus contrived if too narrowly focused (Tolhurst 2012: 6). I turned to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a method that has been productively used with very small samples in innovative or highly experimental research situations. IPA “attends to all aspects of [...] lived experience” in its examination of the individual case within its unique ecological and social entanglement (Eatough and Smith 2010: 181). Data is examined in a series of interrelated case studies. It is of particular use in matters of reflective meaning-making of importance to the subject, and with research populations that are relatively homogenous, but whose diverse contributions are valued, such as here. It has already been used in researching yoga and other mindful movement practitioners by Alaric Newcombe (2015), and its theoretical foundation in phenomenology is appropriate to research focussing on bodily experience and meaning making. Data collection is dialogical, and analysis is iterative, in a double hermeneutic, with the researcher “trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them” (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009: 3).

Principles from Grounded Theory helped guide the more comparative coding processes of the multimedia data from the fieldwork, which were productive of a number of useful analytical themes. These themes in combination with the theory of IPA were useful in structuring analysis of the co-practice data in a series of case studies. Whenever possible, first-stage analysis was relayed to respondents for further reflection. More abstract layers of analysis were consistently related back to specific data, and the search for common narrative did not erase the individuality of each case study, but neither was each experiential account taken to

hold absolute truth status beyond the stories we tell ourselves and each other about how our lives are lived (Silverman 2006: 134).

## Notation

For both co-practices and fieldwork, coding and thematic analysis (Davidsson Bremborg 2013: 318) includes the analysis of visual cues and bodily gestures. Because of the diversity of practices, schools, sources and lineages involved, there is no standard notation or typology of yogic *mudrā* (hand gesture) or *āsana*, by name, description or graphic. During my research, experimental typologies for understanding post-lineage yoga practice emerged and were tested on an iterative basis (Nelson and Woods Jr 2013: 133-4). The most challenging aspect of methodology was deciding how to notate the kinetic and interoceptive, performative and lived practice to enable its comparison. It became clear in the fieldwork that the diversity of post-lineage practice is reflective of a similar diversity of aims and experiences. Beyond the visual data, interoceptive data is by its nature highly subjective, and its analysis relies on developing a richness of vocabulary and thickness of sense impressions in what Eduardo Viveiros de Castro has called a “good enough description” that retains its natural paradoxes (2014: 15).

Despite its uncertain status within the discipline of dance studies, choreology: “the science of movement patterns” (Kurath 1956: 177) held promise in contributing to the recording and comparison of kinetic data (Watts 2010: 15), and somaesthetics for the consideration of evaluative interoception (Arnold 2005: 60). Standard dance notation is usually derived from the work of Rudolph Laban or that of Joan and Rudolf Benesh. Laban’s Eukinetics “is the study of rhythm, phrasing and dynamics in dance. It categorises four basic factors in motion: Weight: Light or Strong; Time: Sustained or Sudden; Flow: Free or Bound; Space: Flexible or Direct” (Athreya 2001), whilst Benesh notation, and its simplified version, Motif, are constructed like a musical score, as we can see in Royal Academy of Dance (2014) and Guest (2007) respectively.

But yoga is not dance, and in order to faithfully notate kinetic practice and include such vital elements as breath flow and internal alignment, a range of systems, including practitioners’ own individualised notation practices, contributed to my recording of the practice. My notation reflects all those aspects of the practice that I wished to analyse: the shapes, movements and pacing of practice; interoceptive aims and experience; orientation to the ecology of practice; and the processes of transmission.

Beyond an initial recording of data, my notation system became of vital use in representing examples of practice within the thesis itself. It further became clear that a notation system designed to capture and represent not just the movements, but the intentions and other



qualities of post-lineage practice, is applicable to many other similar datasets. When I shared my notes with a few other scholars, we realised that it was adaptable to many such movement practices, and could even enable innovative methods of comparison between them.

A similar system produced within the study of a community with a narrower range of common practice would still be a significant innovation in the field of yoga studies. But it is the very diversity of post-lineage practice data that necessitated such an adaptable, modifiable notation system to emerge as a significant output of this thesis. Thus, the following explanation minimises the detail of development in the production of my notation system. Instead, it focuses on a clear explanation of motivations and major features that the reader can use to navigate the notation used in the rest of the thesis, and in the confidence that it will be of further use to future research.

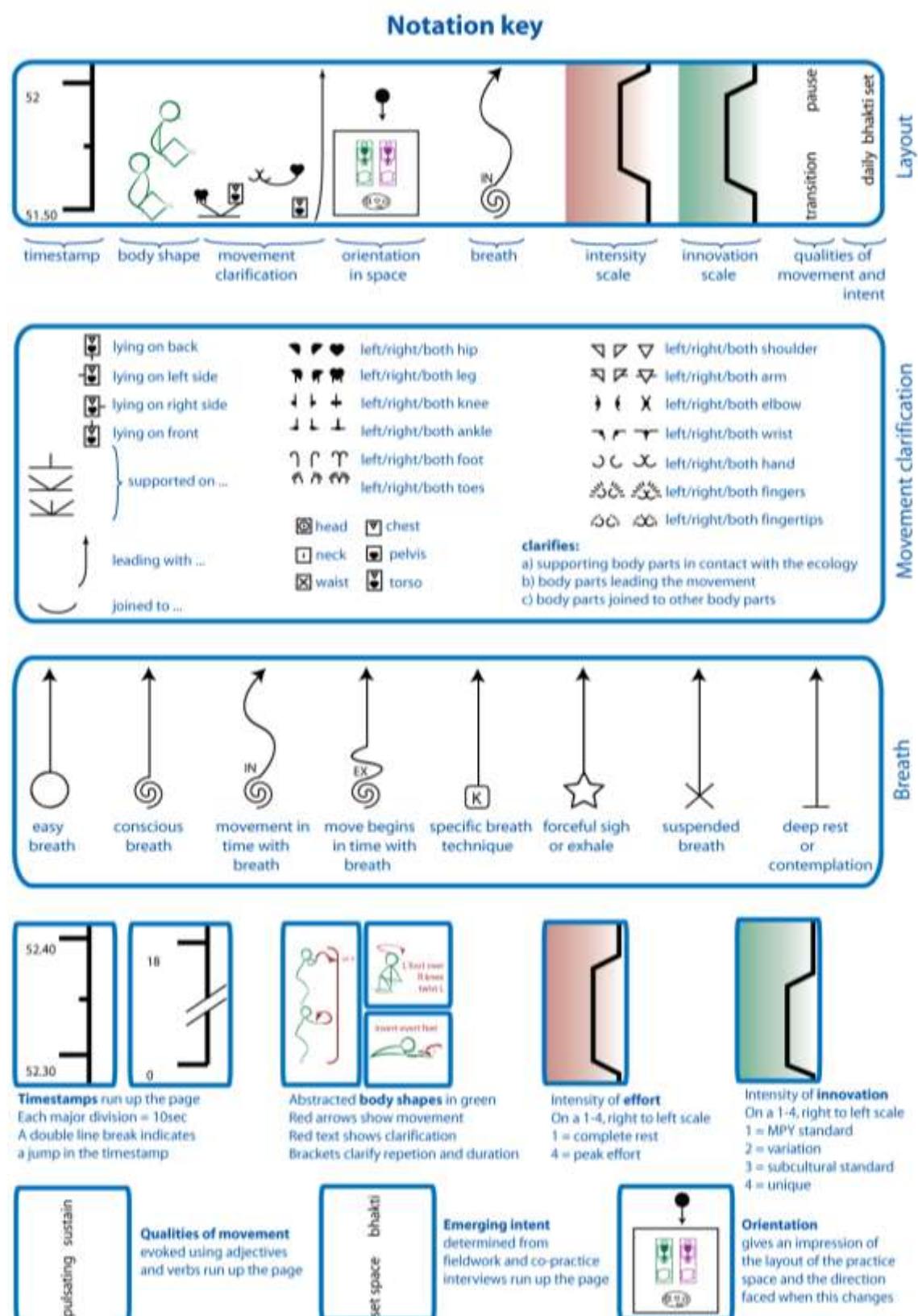


Fig. 1. Notation key

Reading each line of the notation in fig. 1 from left to right, the first element is a simple timestamp, followed by an abstract visual representation of the shape held by the respondent's body (in green) in that moment. The various colours are included only to make

the diagrams more readable. During the case studies, the camera ran constantly, and thus the timestamp there corresponds closely to the length of the practice. During fieldwork however, I filmed only short fragments of sessions and other scenes of interest, and the timestamp there is often absent when included in this thesis as it only refers to its timing within an arbitrary filming schedule, and not to any relevant timing of the session itself. (Red) arrows indicate directions of movement, brackets indicate a repeated movement, and occasional text is added for clarification of, for example, which foot is represented. Any verbal asides or external noises are also represented here. This line of the notation lacks the exact precision of Benesh or Laban, but can be read much more easily by a non-expert. It allows for a more immediate impression of the overall arc of the bodily shape held by the respondent in each moment.

The following example is from **Tanya**'s practice, who will be introduced in the next chapter as the organiser of the Sundara event. We can see that the timestamp runs from 11 minutes 20 seconds to 11 minutes 30, and then compresses the next three minutes, jumping to 14 minutes 20. In fig. 2 we can see Tanya is kneeling, leaning forward to her timer and saying a few words. The sound of the timer is represented with a 'bing', and for the rest of the time shown, Tanya is sitting on her feet, hands on her knees, with her abdomen moving in and out in the repeated practice called 'breath of fire'.

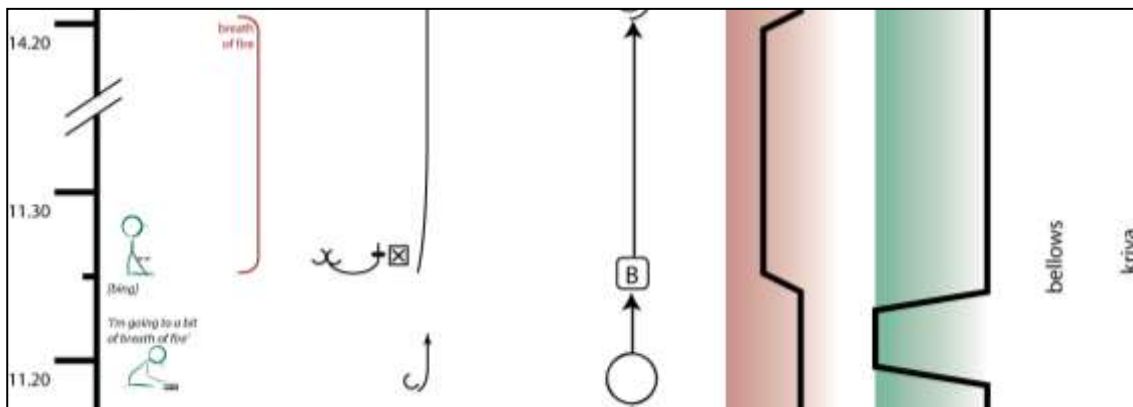


Fig. 2. Case study 5: Breath of fire

The next line clarifies three aspects of the movement and posture that emerged as most useful to analysis. These are: which body parts are in contact with the ground (suggesting their relationship to ecology); which body part(s) are leading (suggesting somatic focus); and whether any body parts are in contact with each other (suggesting intrapersonal connection). This part of the notation is most influenced by Motif notation. However, the Motif symbols, whilst fast to sketch, are difficult as a non-specialist to tell apart, relying on counting multiple hash lines on a staff. For this system it was worth creating more distinctive shapes for my own ease and that of the reader, using the key above. This line allows for more detail to be shown

of these three specific aspects. In the above example, the line shows that Tanya does not change her position with regard to contact with the ground, but she does bring her hands to her knees. When changing the timer, she leads with her right hand, and during the breath of fire, her abdomen is leading all movement.

The next line represents the respondent's orientation to the space. At the start of notation, this contains a simplified representation of the physical environment, which is repeated only each time the respondent changes position relative to the overall space. For this reason, individual notation extracts may not include it. When it is relevant, it also shows the researcher's position within the practice space. Elsewhere on the line, arrows are used to denote a change in orientation by the respondent without a change in position relative to space. This line allows for an impression of the practice space overall, and the respondent's movement relative to ecology. In fig. 3, from Sivani Mata's practice, we can see her moving from sitting to hands and knees. At first, she turns away from me, and we can see her voiced discomfort with that position. Eventually, she reorients herself entirely in the space, which we can see from the inclusion of a diagram of the space. This also shows us the space is crowded with furniture and ritual paraphernalia.

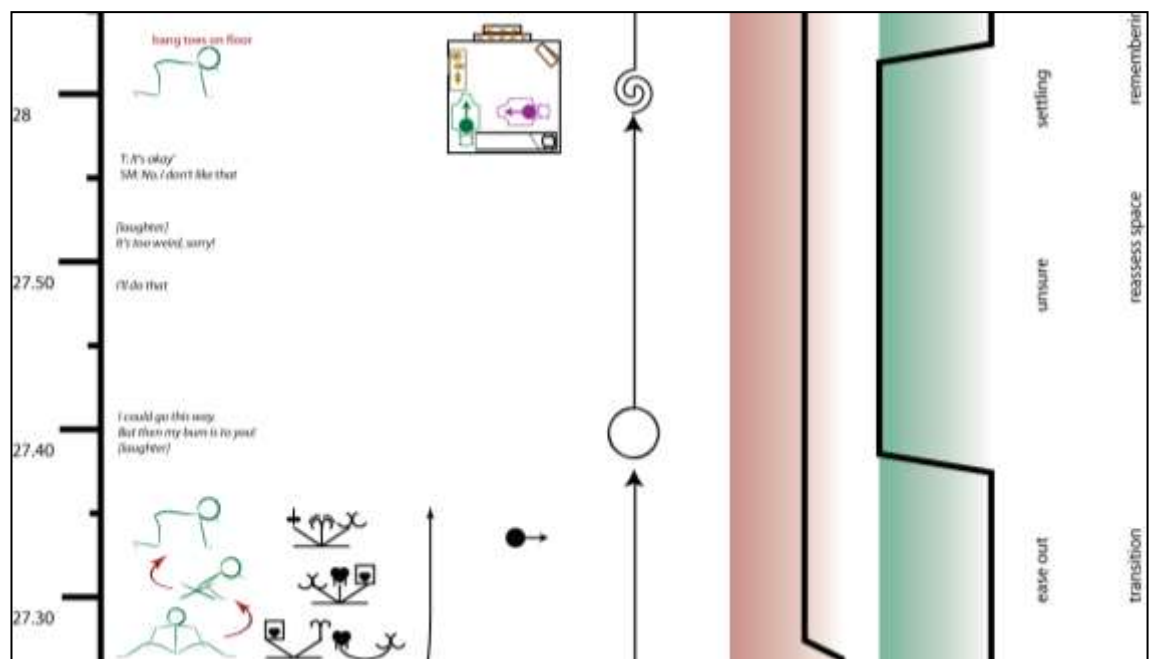


Fig. 3. Case study 4: Negotiating space

The next line is the most unique in notation, as dance rhythms are almost always oriented to a musical tempo, whilst in yoga, movement and stillness alike are most frequently oriented to the tempo of the respondent's breath. In this line, breath notation describes three interdependent factors. Initial symbols denote the respondent's breath pattern, such as a

circle for easy, normal breathing, spiral for conscious, deliberate breathing, or a horizontal line for a suspended breath. An arrow leading from that symbol extends for the length of time that pattern is held. The vertical bar of that arrow has a horizontal wave if the movement and breath are in time. That wave returns to a straight vertical if the movement begins on the breath, but does not continue to hold that pace. Finally, a small 'IN' or 'EX' is added if the movement always begins on an inhale or exhale. This line allows notation of a foundational element of contemporary yoga practice. The many different ways breath and movement are combined can here be represented. In the above example, the breath of Sivani Mata, another case study, shifts from a non-deliberate to a deliberate pattern as she settles into a new position.

The next two lines of notation are scales. They are impressionistic, referring to my own, informed understanding of interoceptive and relational aspects of the practice, respectively. The first suggests the relative intensity in intent and movement at a given moment compared to that specific practice overall, as I both experienced it and as understood from the post-practice interviews. Thus, lying down resting would rate a '1', and a complex arm balance necessitating intense concentration would rate a '4'. Some practices describe a series of waves, some sustain a higher level of intensity overall. This line confers a sense of the overall intensity pattern of mental and physical effort, what we might call the cost of the practice, but it is approximate, and subjective, and does not lend itself to such nuances as practices of intense concentration that are conducted in a simple seated position, which rated a '2', for example.

The second line suggests the relative innovation of a given element of practice compared to the sub-culture as a whole. This scale is dependent on prior knowledge, obtained during my fieldwork, of how far each practice element diverges from the norms of the modern postural yoga mainstream, from the most dominant lineages, and from the subculture as a whole. Some elements are familiar from the most common modern postural yoga standards, in accepted or variant forms. These rate as a '1' and '2' here respectively. Some elements are unusual within the wider yoga cultural repertoire, but are often practiced within the research subculture. These rate as a '3'. Some are unique to the respondent's practice or teaching. These rate as a '4'. In practice, the boundaries between categories of innovation are porous, and again, this is a numerical scale that describes a subjective impression. This line thus confers a sense of the overall pattern of orthodoxy and innovation, what we might consider as evidence of cultural evolution within the practice. Either line could be replaced by another useful metric, but within this project, my informed impressions of the intensity and innovation were the most useful to record. In fig. 4 (over page), Uma, the organiser of the Santosa event,

pauses to rearrange her clothing, before effort resumes, in a series of spinal movements that shift between variations on a form of *uḍḍīyana bandha* (abdominal ‘lock’) and wriggling movements that are all her own.

The final two lines of notation are entirely qualitative. They consist of a series of descriptive words. The first evokes an observation of the quality of the movement, using terms such as pulsating, sustained or precise. The second recalls cues from context both internal and external to the practice to suggest the intent of each element.

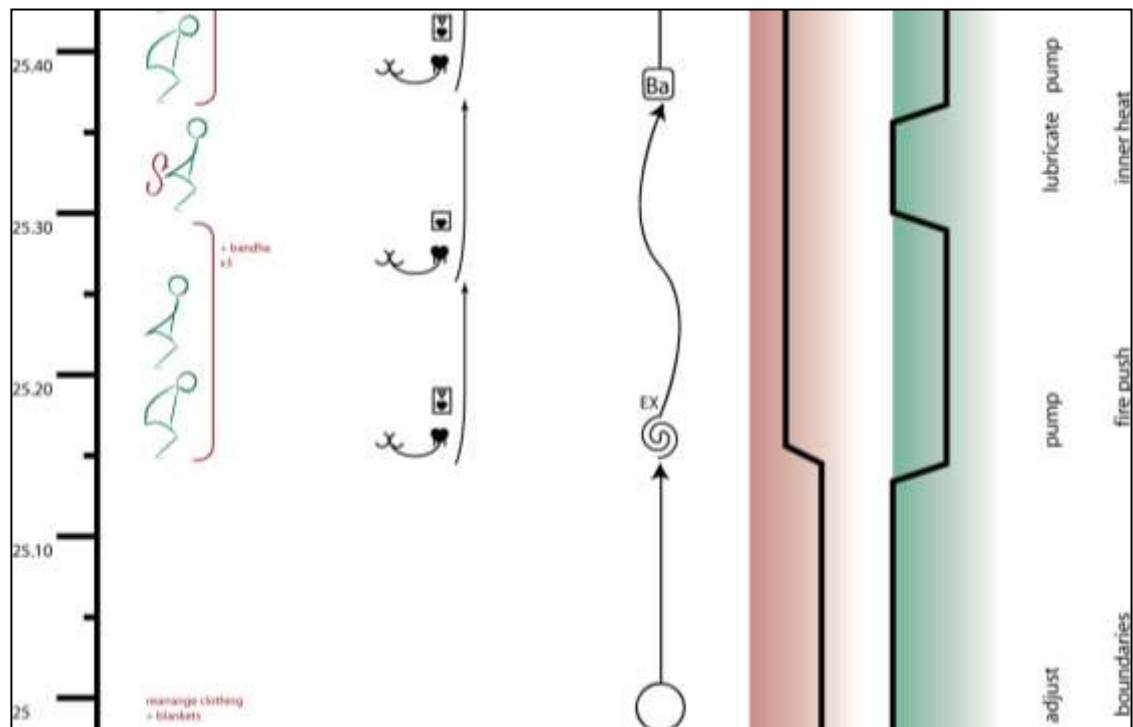


Fig. 4. Case study 3: *Uḍḍīyana bandha*

This part of the notation was conducted with detailed reference to the co-practice interviews, and fieldwork notes of group practices taught by the respondent. Taken together, the lines enable both a thickening of sense description, and a first analysis of the relationship between practice and intent. Either line could be replaced by a different descriptive field if more appropriate to a different research project. In the above example, movements with a pumping and lubricating quality are used with the intention of raising energy and heat in the body.

Each element of the notation facilitated further analysis. Practices could be printed to be visualised as a whole, enabling consideration of them as distinct case studies. Differences between practices, and therefore case studies, were also immediately apparent when visually comparing their notation. The notation performs a coding function, as common elements or themes were easy to find both within and between practices. At the same time the coherence

of each practice as a distinct, holistic part of the data was maintained. Most existing dance notation systems dedicate the most space to lines for each body part, rendering movement in space with more precision. In contrast, this notation system is more concerned with the line of the body in space as a whole, and dedicates space to lines for the many essential factors of practice that do not concern shape, such as breath, intensity, innovation and intent, thus enabling their synchronous comparison. As a result, as we will see, I was able to much more accurately relate movement and intention to interoceptive and somatic experience.

## Some fault lines and conclusions

Within the process of analysis, it became clear that as the different lenses of text, fieldwork and co-practice interviews were brought to bear on the research, the data produced was not uniform. Processes of interoception, performance and transmission did not map neatly on to each other. To use a musical analogy, a score that represented the movements of a given yoga session would be on a different line of a score from one representing its transmitted understanding, or its interoceptive experience. As my notation shows, different lines are synchronous and can be compared, but are not coterminous. Different methodological tools were not merely lenses considering the same subject, they were examining overlapping but distinct forms of subject matter. The lacunae formed from the partial correspondence of movement to experience, and movement to transmitted experience, are key to understanding the incremental and individualised ways in which movement cultures both reproduce themselves and allow for those errors or echoes in reproduction that produce innovation and diversity (Holloway 2003: 1971). In the gap between the bodies of teacher and student, method, aim and experience, transformation can occur. In the fault lines between the bodies of researcher and respondent, participant and target of observation, lie everyday fieldwork experiences such as fatigue, confusion, and misunderstanding, but also a deeper understanding of the crevasses of possible neurological and physical difference that the transmission structures of interoceptive and kinetic practice aim to overcome.

The research design was necessarily and deliberately productive of the partial truths and experimental conclusions familiar to qualitative research as a whole. The research has been designed to provoke as many questions as answers and to explore and test new theories for the study of lived and moved religious practice, a field as yet in early development. The question of how to more clearly analyse intra- and interpersonal transmission of physical practice is not fully answered by this research project, and as such survives the research process to become part of its conclusion.

My methodology is more than experimental. Its primary method is the experiment, in the form of a comparative analysis of its diverse methodological lenses, which continually refers back to its data target in the search for increased clarity in answering the research question. As such, it is 'real world research' (Robson 2002) in action, as productive of new methodology as it is of new data.





## 4. Colourfest, Santosa and Sundara

My research activities began with a shifting network of post-lineage, non-commercial yoga devotees who gather at a series of annual events to, as they put it, “feed their souls” in order to better serve their communities. I focused on three specific camps, chosen in order to identify their cultural commonalities. It was my aim to stay close to the lived experiences of the practices themselves, and how they are transmitted, but it was useful to start with a more general investigation of this little-known subculture. This chapter begins that process with a vignette of each camp: Colourfest, Santosa, and Sundara. It is followed by an introduction to some of the key figures at the heart of their shared community.

### Colourfest



[Colourfest website](#)

“Our background is yoga but this festival opens itself to other ways to experience beauty and depth in life, whether it’s through yoga, music, art, dance, storytelling, poetry or theatre.” – **Rowan** Cobelli and **Robbie** Newman, Colourfest’s organisers

As the above quote suggests, although Colourfest does not produce much promotional material, its aesthetic is coherent, and familiar from the way boutique music festivals are packaged and promoted in mainstream culture (for examples see Coldwell 2017). The elegance of the logo and high-quality photography of its website carry over into the site, where white marquees seem to float in the landscaped grounds of country houses in Dorset. In 2017, Colourfest moved from its original location at St Giles to nearby Gaunts’. Both sites rent space for a diversity of more and less commercial festivals, courses and retreats with a respective focus on music and the arts, and self-development, and Colourfest is just one event on their summer schedule. As attendees, teachers and crew pick their way around the site, a sense of borrowed privilege is inherent in the feel of close-cropped lawns underfoot. Some of the

sessions on yogic philosophy take place in libraries lined with leather-bound books. There are DJs playing in the evenings, under twinkling lights in woodland.

It would be wrong to mistake the professionalism of the event that Rowan describes here for commercial intent:

“Each year we get tighter. The flow of it gets tighter, the professionalism gets tighter. The beauty of the structures gets tighter.”

Colourfest is not officially a non-profit organisation. But thus far its organisers have only aimed to break even on their £30,000 - £40,000 annual investment. As Rowan says:

“[If we] look at how we're spending and where we're spending and the amount of freebees and artist exchanges [...], it's a fine line. So, if we refine that potentially it could make an income but it's difficult.”

None of the organisers of this or similar events collect exact demographical information about their attendees. Even the number of volunteers can be approximate, as people drop in and out up to the last minute. Income and expenditure will vary from year to year. All demographic information in this thesis is, therefore, based on my observations and confirmed with the estimates of organisers.

A ticket to Colourfest costs around £150, but as many as a third of the people onsite will be working and not paying for a ticket. Together, there are around 1,500 people onsite during the peak weekend days, although prices encourage people to book and attend the whole four days. Like many small festivals, the event helps to cover its costs through licensing stallholders. Exact demographics for the event are difficult to ascertain, but compared to an average British urban population, attendees are more likely to be 20-50 years old, and perhaps a little more likely to be white.

On site, there is a circle of stalls selling clothing and a range of exclusively vegetarian foods, raw chocolate and turmeric lattes, with a field kitchen for crew around the back. Elsewhere on site is a canvas and wood burner, pay-for sauna. As well as dedicated spaces for taught yoga and facilitated dance, here and there in various corners are bodies playing with hula hoops and exploring partner acrobatics.

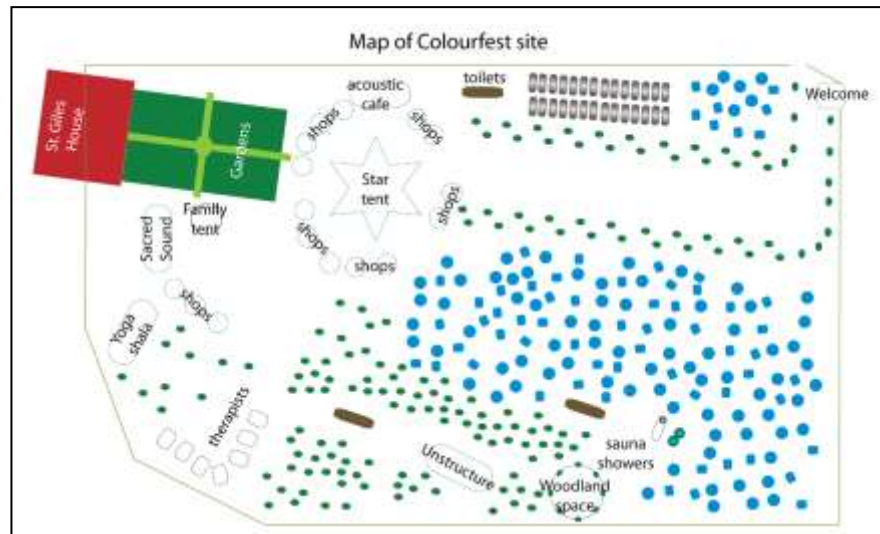


Photo and map of Colourfest at St. Giles' House

This is a festival that appeals to a wealthy urban clientele, whilst also being tailored to the ethics, interpersonal interactions and consumption habits of yoga practitioners. Here they sell branded water bottles, and sport lotus flower tattoos. Robbie and Rowan, both founders and organisers, are two yoga teachers from Bournemouth who started Colourfest together in response to their experiences at festivals and other music-based events.

“We started saying, wouldn't it be amazing if all the things we loved were in a festival?” – Robbie

The recent influence of rave culture on British yoga, as described in my introduction, is evident at Colourfest in the décor, music and personal histories of many attendees. Yet the hedonistic substance usage that defined that subculture is categorically banned. The highs Colourfest aims for are internally produced, again, in response to Rowan and Robbie's previous festival experiences.

"I'd been going to a lot of festivals as well and just being very disillusioned and disheartened by what I saw there. In the name of coming together I just saw really disconnected debauchery." – Rowan

A wide diversity of sessions is on offer, including early morning and evening chanting or silent meditation, acrobatically sequenced *āsana* sessions accompanied by urban beats, but also more unusual offerings including somatic and shamanic explorations of movement. There are non-yoga movement disciplines to try, from African Dance to Contact Improvisation (a contemporary movement practice exploring movement in relationship), but this is a festival as reimagined through contemporary yoga: less hedonistic, more athletic, delighting in diversity and connection. And there is a deeper intention that reaches beyond personal enjoyment or physical wellbeing. A promotional film for the event describes Colourfest as "a chance to deepen your own journey". What is on offer here is carefully selected to be in line with the contemporary yogic ethic of holistic self-development.

Robbie and Rowan trained within the **Integral Yoga** lineage, developed from the teachings of Swami Satchidananda, so Colourfest's offerings are structured in accordance with the Swami's typology of yoga, which covers meditation, physical practice, devotion, selfless action, self-inquiry and *mantra* repetition (chanting). However Integral Yoga is not their only source of inspiration, and activities on offer at Colourfest incorporate many different schools of yoga.

One experimental dance session brings three yoga and movement teachers together with live musicians and a poet for a 'jam' in the 'Unstructure' space. Thirty to forty people move and rest in turn, alone, in couples, and in trios, as a resident poet frames the experience with improvised, hypnotic lines.

"Spirit takes us back to our burden of green tangled, crazy hope. And we are no longer safe. But we are dancing, and we are dancing, free and mad..."

Another style of yoga-inspired movement that is taught at all three of these events is **Shakti Dance**. Its teachers combine **Kundalini Yoga mantras** (a yoga practice developed from the teachings of Yogi Bajan), with scripted dance and yoga postures. At the end of one Shakti Dance session that I attended, I remember listening to a dulcimer playing, and feeling as if the little part of the world I could see was blessed and I with it. Even so, I remained acutely aware of how transitory the experience was, and how little the ecology around me was an active partner in the process. I wondered then how the line can be drawn between communion and privilege.

For ticket holders, teachers and crew, Colourfest is an immersive, often intense environment, serving as a bridge for those looking to move beyond festival hedonism without the overt seriousness of a self-developmental yoga retreat. Everything at Colourfest is designed to draw attendees into contemplation, self-exploration and conscious inter-relationship with the people around them. What smooths that path is the quality of its surroundings, and the talents of those who work the event. Much of that talent is drawn from therapists and yoga teachers located in and around Bournemouth, and personally connected to the organisers. This is supplemented by their contacts from the wider British yoga camp network, including a number of the people in my case studies. All the teachers have complex and diverse relationships to a multiplicity of lineages. As at each of these camps, supporting the public face of taught sessions and performances is a web of interpersonal intimacy. This close and interdependent network is supplemented by a few respected teachers from overseas. Yet there is no obvious hierarchy of prestige in the way teachers are presented. Some students and teachers may form affinity groups, but also welcome the many opportunities to come together in practice beyond that. Rowan and Robbie model a quiet, contained self-effacement and broad welcome to all in their relationships and teaching.

There is a way of interacting at all of these camps that is rarely experienced in commercial yoga spaces. It is in the warmth of the greetings between friends and strangers alike, and the care with which people treat each other. It is how people in the same subculture relate to each other when two of their markers for shared identity are taking responsibility for their wellbeing and common ethical references governing interpersonal relations. And it may have a long history, given this contemporary description by Rom Landau of the 1927 Theosophical Star Camp in the grounds of a Dutch castle:

They generally abhor the idea of meat as violently as that of wine or tobacco; they look deep into your eyes when they talk to you; they have weakness for sandals, for clothes without any particular distinction of shape, [...] and such colours as mauve, bottle-green and purple (Goldberg 2016b: 55).



Impromptu market, Colourfest

Those teaching at and running Colourfest are not spiritual entrepreneurs of self-interested wellbeing (Bowman 2009: 166). They are experienced teachers and practitioners who are mostly well respected by other teachers, but little known. They do not have the brand identities Michele Goldberg (2015) sets out as necessary for international recognition. Some of the teachers lead more comfortable and conventional lives but many don't. They arrive in live-in vehicles, or supplant meagre incomes by selling a little jewellery gathered on travels in India and South America. This may be just one stop for them in a semi-nomadic, off-grid summer spent traveling from camp to retreat to camp, collaborating with the same friends and connections in a variety of roles.

Two types of people thus come together at Colourfest to give it a unique flavour, where the mainstream meets the counterculture. Many of the ticket holders come looking for an enjoyable festival weekend that might offer something a little healthier, or because they want to explore a little more of what yoga can offer beyond their local classes. They are more likely to arrive just for the weekend, and cope with dietary restrictions rather than enthusiastically embrace them. They might consider yoga as part of a self-described spiritual-but-not-religious identity, a chosen element from those afforded by income and urban living.

But the consumption restrictions and activities on offer at Colourfest are created and embraced by the network of people at the heart of the event. They are the ones in the dawn meditation sessions, or patiently waiting to offer petals to the altar in the *pūjās*. They will treat themselves to raw chocolate, but eat meals in the crew tent. They come here mostly to explore new inspirations and to connect with friends. They are not obviously jostling for position and students as spiritual entrepreneurs, nor is there much on offer for them to sell, although as we shall see, there are more discrete flows of power and charisma at play here. And they have a distinct and shared cultural identity separate from the more casual attendees who come to practise with them, even though they may be well-used to serving their needs.



The Beat Goes Om session, Colourfest

## Santosa Living Yoga and Bhakti Camp

Whilst Colourfest is early in the camp season, near the beginning of June, Santosa takes its place in late August, when the British summer is already fading. And while Colourfest aims for no more than 1500 people onsite, Santosa's numbers are unlikely to top 250. Santosa prides itself on its survival, running as it has since 2005.



Santosa flyer 2015

Santosa's annual budget is around £24,000, and over the years it has occasionally made a profit, but more often a loss which its founders, Uma Dinsmore-Tuli and her partner Nirlipta Tuli, are happy to absorb. The full ticket price is £375, but this is for a ten-day camp, and it includes all meals, and far fewer opportunities to spend money than at Colourfest. There is a small chai shop, and anyone may lay down a blanket and display a little handmade jewellery or second-hand clothes for sale. However, almost two thirds of the people onsite will be working in some way for their attendance. They do not pay for a ticket, but make a donation to cover the cost of meals. As at both Colourfest and Sundara, a handful of therapists offering everything from reiki to massage provide paid-for treatments onsite, and contribute a percentage of their earnings to the event organisers.



Together, there are around 150 to 200 people at Santosa during the peak weekend days. Again, demographic data for the event is approximate. There is a more even spread of ages here. Including food in the ticket price deliberately attracts more young families, and older attendees say they appreciate that many of the activities on offer are less physically taxing, and that the community feels supportive to them. There are also more attendees here of South Asian origin than at Colourfest, perhaps reflecting the event's greater emphasis on Hindu devotional rituals. Yet in this corner meadow within sight of Glastonbury Tor I meet a significant number of the same people who shape Colourfest, and I know that Rowan and Robbie drop in here sometimes. Here too they lead *bhakti*, ritual and ecstatic dance sessions.

The yoga practices on offer here are more eclectic than at Colourfest. There is a sense that more obscure styles are welcomed, and a higher proportion of their peers attend any led sessions. There are sessions exploring the energy patterns of sound, belly dancing workshops, and meditations with trees reminiscent of the 'Council of Beings', in which "participants prepare by spending an hour or so apart from other humans seeking an empathetic immersion into 'nature'" (Harvey 2006: 182). Fig. 5 is a notation extract from the 'cacao ceremony', in which, following the communal drinking of ritually prepared cacao, we can see movement instructions accompanied by more esoteric narration, in this case recognising the connection of the physical self with the earth.



Fig. 5a. Santosa: Cacao Ceremony

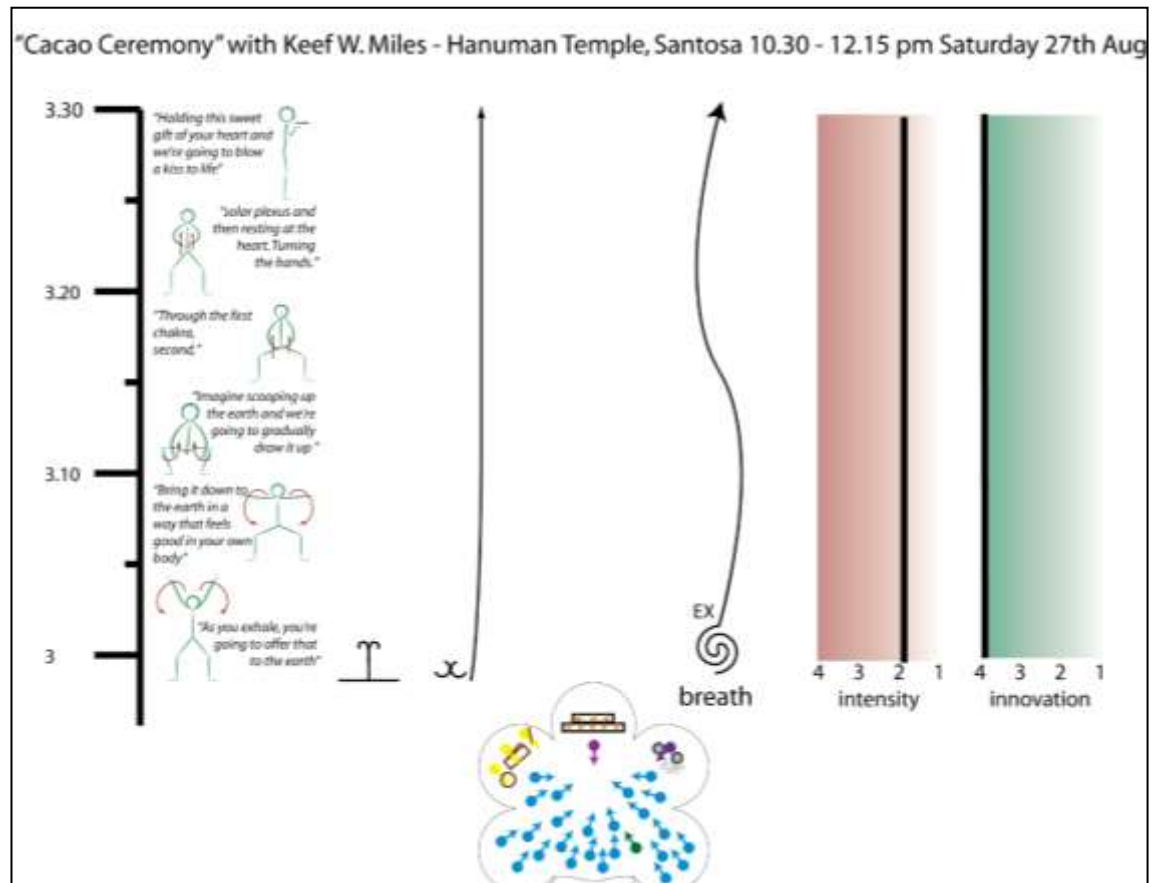
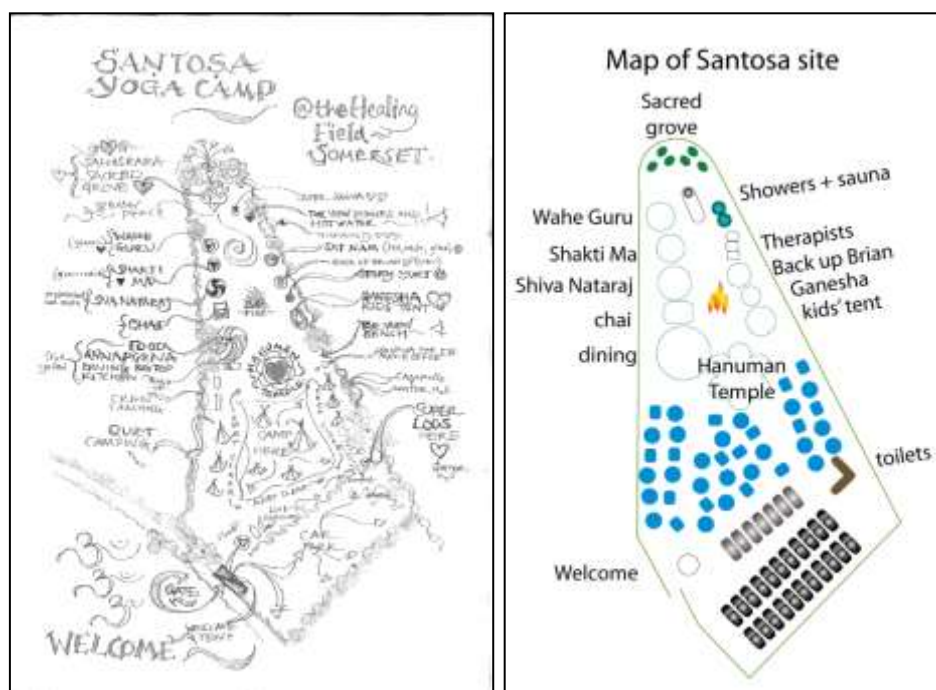


Fig. 5b. Santosa: Cacao Ceremony

Other sessions are labelled with descriptive terms such as 'gentle' or 'flowing', or the names of obscure blended styles such as Kashmir Yoga (a specific school of yoga based on the teachings of Jean Klein. For details, see the website at Rossi (2017)). There is a sense of experimentation here, using this intimate space among friends and affinity groups to explore new techniques and repertoires together. Moving in so many experimental ways can rapidly expand everyone's personal and professional repertoire of moving, resting, or breathing. But from time to time the urge is strong for many long-term practitioners there to reconnect with their own movement habits. From time to time here too, solitary figures across the small site can be seen quietly exploring a more individual practice.

Interestingly, a few teachers here and at other camps will attend no peer-taught sessions at all. Although bodily experiences are the ground of the event, the heart of the camp is only partly about trying new ways of moving, and as much in the making and maintaining of relationships with peers. In general conversation between teachers, certain concerns predominate: What factors are changing the landscape of our practice and teaching? What worries us? What's new?

This is also the longest of the three camps, an extended gathering to share *santosa*: lexicalised as Santosa, and defined here as “the happy acceptance of what is, just as it arises”. Cars and live-in vehicles are segregated, but tents scatter and merge with more formal camp structures: the compost toilets, the communal field kitchen, the geodesic practice domes, and the interlocking nodes of the ‘Bhakti Temple’ yurt. This site, unusually, is only used for one or two other, similar camps each summer. A number of low impact structures: the compost toilets, the fencing and so on, are up all year round. Other structures such as the geodesic practice spaces, are tucked away on site when not in use. Around that infrastructure, Santosa grows each year, from canvas and wood, steel rigging, gas burners, and wood fired stoves. Its layout has evolved through trial and error over the years, and is now modelled deliberately according to an imagined partial map of the yogic esoteric body. In the middle is the devotional temple space, seen as the heart centre of the site. Beyond it is the central fire, recalling the solar plexus. Beyond that is first the watery second *cakra* or energetic node, formed by the washing facilities, and then the earthy sacred grove, with its associations with the base *cakra*.



Maps of the Santosa site, near Glastonbury

Santosa’s origin story is told by its founder, Uma Dinsmore-Tuli:

“We’d had a really beautiful experience of being at the Yoga for Health Foundation which was in Ickwell Bury.” – Uma

“But I never felt completely comfortable there [...]. We were the hippy, festie edge” – Uma

Arising out of the edges of more mainstream yoga events, Santosa trades on its roots in the festival scene. The land is owned by the managers of Glastonbury festival's 'Healing Field'. The camp was born from the same impulse as Colourfest: a desire for what the organisers feel is the temporary autonomy and ecology of British festival spaces, but bounded by contemporary yogic ethics and a prohibition on hedonism.

"And something in my little *yogī* soul was like: wouldn't it be nice if we could just let the kids run and there wouldn't be anyone who was off their head?" – Uma

Uma's background and skillset relates to teaching and writing about yoga (Dinsmore-Tuli 2013b), more than managing events. The camp began with little publicity, no budget, and no idea of how many people would come. Even as Uma has managed to attract an evolving group of more practical people to help her, the camp has kept to the same scale, same site, and the same organisational premise, which Uma describes in the following terms:

"Whatever it is, Sutra 2.41 or 42: *saṁtoṣa* and *tapas*. So it takes *tapas*, it takes disciplined effort, focused attention, [...] in order to create a situation where everybody can experience *saṁtoṣa*." – Uma

Managing the effort and ease in sustaining a yearly non-profit camp like Santosa for over a decade is not easy. For Uma and her husband, Nirlipta, it involves a financial gamble that is smaller than Colourfest, but still substantial. The amount of preparation spanning many months would easily justify a few people being financially compensated for their efforts. Some events do pay site managers and administrators. At any camp, a few key volunteers developing the event burn out or move on every few years. The interpersonal connections involved are more than just professional, and like any long-term community, romantic entanglements, family problems, and conflicts over finances and ethics can easily occur.

The terms Uma uses above, *saṁtoṣa* (ease) and *tapas* (discipline), are Sanskrit terms extracted from Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*, widely read by yoga teachers. The *sūtras* concerned are 2.42 and 2.43. With more yoga teachers in attendance, such conversational references to yogic philosophy are more common at this camp than at Colourfest. A former *saṁnyāsin* (a monk from a Hindu order) attending the camp also describes the camp using Sanskrit terms: "Well. I was looking for a camp that was sattvic. That means in the mode of goodness."

Santosa's publicity speaks to the yoga teaching community, and to those already trying to live an integrated yogic life. Time and again, yoga teachers talk of coming to Santosa as a form of self-sustenance. As Uma understands it:

“A lot of these people are teaching full schedules, from very authentic places, but it's very demanding, and they don't get paid a lot of money.”

Simple service and constructive work are experienced as an essential form of nourishment that daily life does not provide. All attendees valorise being in like-minded community, and in that, value physical presence over virtuality. My own experience of Santosa is marked by a productive tension between self-intimate moments of ethnographic contemplation, maintaining relationships, and stepping into service. This balance of personal need and shared service is echoed in the organisation of the event itself:

“There's not a special VIP place for the teachers to park. [...] Everybody's at the same level. You know? The people who direct the camp are cleaning the toilets and chopping the onions.” – Uma

The aim here is an effortful form of communal sustainability: of land, of culture, and of self-care. Above all, teachers are prized for their ability to teach to whoever arrives, regardless of abilities and experience, and also to the environmental conditions. A number of long-term attendees are neurodivergent, and one's integration into this established community is in part determined by how you interact with its most unconventional members. As one teacher says:

“He's so fabulous, I adore that boy. He really triggers people, I love it. [He] is real, he can tell whether someone is bullshitting him or not.”

Participants in sessions are encouraged to adapt or modify the practices offered according to personal resonance, and teachers do not have to be the sole source of authority and knowledge. The ‘heart’ is frequently named as one's final authority, but the land is an active partner in the process. It is commonly felt that the site itself is particularly sacred, not only because of its sacred geometry, but due to the weight of years of repeated practice upon it, and its proximity to Glastonbury Tor.

At all these camps, the practice spaces are varyingly porous to dirt, weather, and the creatures who live here. In part because of its longevity, of all three camps Santosa is the most consciously grounded in its ecology. There is nothing considered more appropriate in this context than muddy feet on a yoga mat. Even urine becomes a sacred offering to the land:

“Offering your liquid gold to the Mother. And to me that's a spiritual practice because it's like a reconnection. [...] Our wee and our shit and our blood.” – Uma

Santosa is organised around both ecological rhythms of light and darkness, and increasing interpersonal harmony through synchronising visceral rhythms of activity and rest, food and

elimination. Outside of the more physical practice sessions, the core of the camp schedule is *bhaktiyoga*, which brings people's heart and breath rates into synchrony, and *yoganidrā* (guided relaxation), which serves to synchronise the ultradian rhythms of daily activity and rest. Most are up with the dawn, hours before breakfast, to join in various *mantras* and meditations reminiscent of ashram schedules. Within a day or so there, I find myself attuning to a more visceral, somatic sense of self. I take to wrapping myself in the softest of shawls and enjoy the daily rhythm of removing layers as the morning waxes, replacing them one by one as dusk slowly falls. An experience of Santosa is both magical in feel, and grounded in the reality of weather, land, and bodies.



Communal kitchen and Hanuman stories in the Bhakti Temple, Santosa

Community and interpersonal tensions are often expressed through the food on offer. Kundalini Yoga purists argue for “high vibration” raw salads and vegan stews. Feminist practitioners discuss a perceived relationship of ovarian proteins to fertility issues. Over the course of years there is an ongoing and covert, but friendly battle fought over the inclusion of eggs in the camp budget. In 2017 one organiser left non-organic eggs from the local Tesco in the kitchen. By the next day, another had anonymously returned them to the supermarket. Everyone still eats together three times a day, with family, friends and strangers. As Uma writes:

It was never about the money – it was always about sharing, and learning and practising together, and every year it came together and something beautiful happened. (Dinsmore-Tuli 2013a)

## Sundara: Beautiful Beings of Light

Balanced in the middle of summer, Sundara is the youngest gathering of the three. Since its first year in 2015, numbers at the camp are small, but growing. John and Tanya, the organisers, are key figures in running Colourfest, and started the camp after a few years helping to run

Santosa. Many of their teachers and crew are regulars at one or both of the other events, and whilst minor historical conflicts mean some people from Santosa would be uncomfortable there, others happily attend all three events and more. But the structures and location of the site for Sundara's first two years were dependent on another informal network rooted in British counterculture: the Rainbow Futures group, who evolved from the camps of Rainbow Circle and Oak Dragon, which emerged in response to the establishment crackdown on travellers and free festivals of the 1980s, as briefly covered in Worthington (2004).

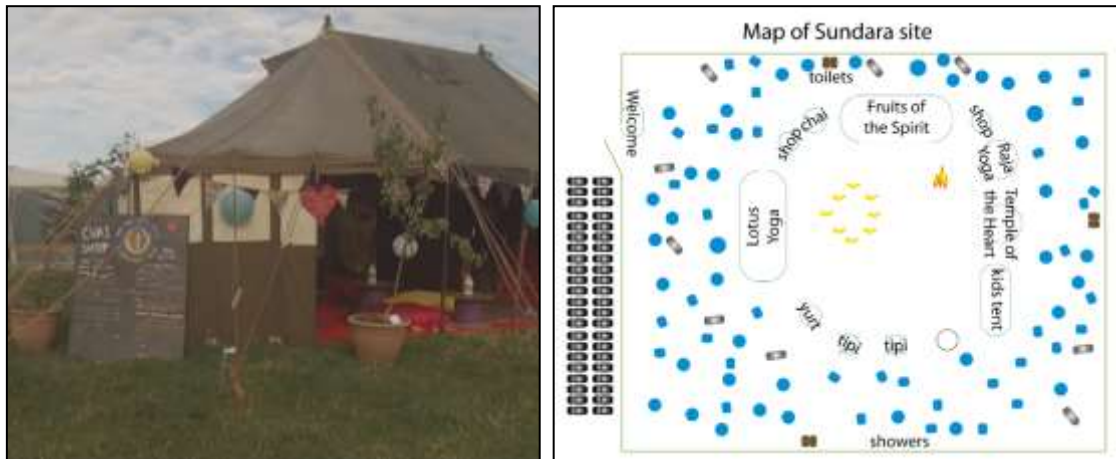


Photo and map of Sundara on the Rainbow Futures site

As John Carter told me, to put on an event like Sundara “can cost anywhere between £15,000 to £20,000”, and in these early years, the event organisers are still investing heavily in marquees, kitchen equipment and other infrastructure. As Rowan said of Colourfest, even commercial festivals struggle to make a profit: “it's like the margins are really, really tight.”

A ticket for Sundara costs around £200 for five days. Interestingly, this means that all three events cost between £35 and £40 a day to attend, when paying full price. Again, all meals are included, and a chai shop, one or two stalls, and therapist commissions help to cover organisational costs. An even larger proportion of people onsite will not have bought a full-price ticket. As many as three quarters of attendees combine working for their ticket, with slightly larger contributions than at Santosa to cover meals and other costs.

Together, there are around 250 people at Sundara during the peak weekend days. Again, demographic data for the event is approximate. There is an approximately even spread of ages here, though not quite as many children and older people than at Santosa. Once more, there are also more attendees here of South Asian origin than at Colourfest, again perhaps reflecting the event's greater emphasis on Hindu devotional rituals. But as John says:



“As we are an open spiritual community, we welcome people of all ethnic backgrounds and therefore do not tend to keep a formal record of our attendance base.”

After a divergence of aims with Uma at Santosa, John and Tanya had aimed to take a break from camp organisation, but changed their minds, because:

“it's literally on our doorstep, all the infrastructure is in. It feels like we've just been handed something on a plate.” – Tanya

By 2018, they had moved on to their own (rented) site nearby, and were constructing compost toilets with volunteers. They were encouraged and helped by many in the yoga camp and Rainbow camp networks. The subculture of post-lineage yoga here is one that is valued for its community support, rather than any incidental entrepreneurial opportunities. As a result, a diversity of events is considered abundant rather than competitive.

A history of working collaboratively with others had proven Tanya and John's competence in event management. Personal skills honed at raves and festivals, retreats and camps, as well as the interpersonal connections they afford, are more valuable than the frugal financial investment in infrastructure that they are now building. Unlike Santosa, they believe that having a clear long-term plan, and the right people in key roles is more sustainable than relying on donations and serendipity.



Morning meeting at the central fire circle, and Rainbow Future's Sun Lodge, Sundara

As John says:

“I think an event can bounce along on the people that turn up and make it work for quite a while but if there isn't a definite financial plan [...] and organisation to it, eventually things start to degrade.”

At this camp, I witness the birth of a new community, as the seed of Sundara separates from Santosa, meets the fertile ground of Rainbow Futures, but then moves on again. Within the newness can be traced an inherited web of complex interpersonal affinities and tensions. The



site of the camp for the first three years is a hill in the Forest of Dean, with the River Severn on three sides. More compact than Colourfest, but larger and less contained by surrounding hedge lines than Santosa, it is approached via a long and narrow, winding road with discrete signage, and then up across a rutted field to flags flying on the windy hilltop. This is another borrowed site, on long-term periodic loan for summer after summer. This rented agricultural field is dotted with structures that Rainbow Futures will use throughout their summer of seven camps, and then deconstruct and store for the winter, as sheep move back in to graze. Among these sit a 'chai' shop, a couple of stalls selling second hand clothes and original art, and a central fire circle. 'Chai' is ubiquitous at these events, but unlike the highly sugared and caffeinated, Indian spiced tea that it is named after, this is a very different version adapted to the consumption habits of the community: sugar-free, and made with herbal Rooibos and plant milks.

Regardless of the pre-published schedule, the camp has a soft start, as does Santosa. A handful of people join in the first session of Dances of Universal Peace (a New Age group practice of dance and song) and by the start of the subsequent opening ritual, around 50 are present. This is a Tuesday. By the weekend, those numbers will have tripled. Filling that schedule again will be an eclectic mix of dance, *āsana* and other movement sessions, meditations, relaxations and talks. The aforementioned Dances of Universal Peace is another practice that mixes movement and music with esoteric themes. In fig. 6 (over page), a Buddhist *mantra* is sung with accompanying gestures of prayer in order to offer homage to *Buddha* (the enlightened one), *dharma* (spiritual path or teachings) and *saṃgha* (the spiritual community).

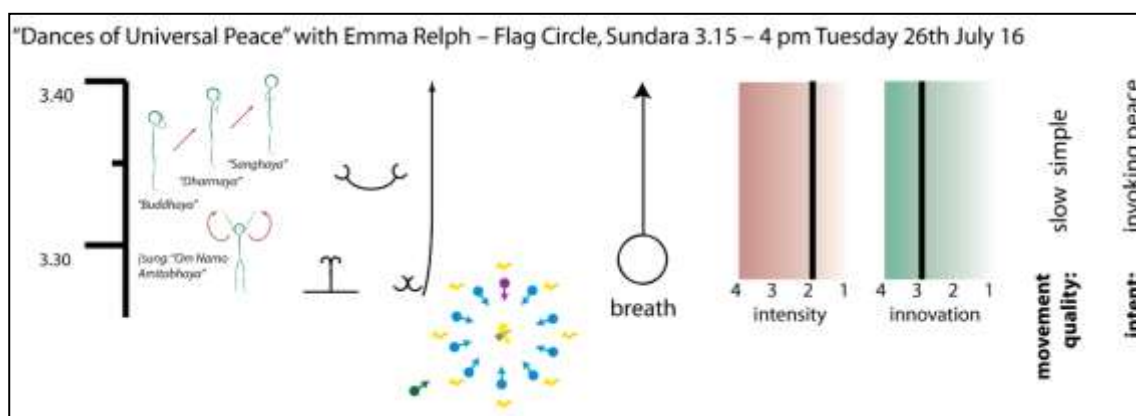


Fig. 6a. Sundara: Dances of Universal Peace



Fig. 6b. Sundara: Dances of Universal Peace

Sundara is less earthy than Santosa, and less polished than Colourfest. Carpet is laid in many spaces. Practical service is optional but encouraged. The camp runs on working tickets that are cheaper than full price. Communal meals are provided for all. It has a higher proportion of people actively teaching on site than Colourfest, but fewer than at Santosa.

The camp also relies on a kind of low-tech cultural infrastructure that is common to Santosa and a number of other camps. Blackboards enable last-minute alterations to the schedule to be widely communicated. Conches or industrial-sized pan lids are sounded for the key moments of rituals and meals. A daily morning meeting is used to recap the schedule, welcome new arrivals and broadcast any practical issues. These innovations can be charmingly confusing to newcomers, even if they are yoga teachers, yet familiar to others used to attending eco-anarchist, pagan, or other countercultural events. They are rarely used at Colourfest because of its size, and because the community that understands its norms is not in the majority there. The food at Sundara is not for sale, but produced as part of a communal kitchen, like Santosa, here run by one of the main organisers of the Calais One Spirit Ashram Kitchen. Vegan stews and elaborate salads are supplemented by Tanya's own raw chocolate, on sale in the Chai Shop next door.

The yoga taught here at Sundara is both gentler and more unusual than at Colourfest, closer to that of Santosa, but with more sessions referencing Yogi Bhañan's Kundalini Yoga, reflecting the personal preferences of its organisers. And although he doesn't have time to teach at Colourfest, Rowan pops in here sometimes to teach a quiet session of inwardly focused, low-intensity Integral Yoga. Elsewhere, and among the more eclectic sessions is Systemic Constellations, described as "a mix of psychoanalysis, Zulu shamanism and phenomenology".

Most of the sessions have aims overtly related to personal transformation. Speaking during her own Kundalini Yoga session, Tanya explains: “know that this is giving you the ability to break through any old habits and patterns of addictive behaviour.”

Santosa has five *yoganidrā* sessions a day, reflecting Uma and Nirlipta’s professional identities as founders of the inter-lineage **Total Yoga Nidra Network**. Here at Sundara there is one daily rest practice, often a gong bath (a guided sound healing practice). One stalwart of the scene longs half-jokingly for a session of “ordinary yoga”. Like Colourfest, Sundara aims to offer multiple paths for self-development, but the ultimate framing is more communal:

“The idea is that people just come to a realisation that we can all actually live together happily. And do work on ourselves in a loving environment where other people are around.” – John

In its second year, the camp’s theme was “Stepping up”, with a focus on engaging in cultural change, inspired by the projects already started by key figures in the wider subculture:

“Well people are getting involved in things, [V] is off in the Amazon, Ian is in Calais doing the Ashram kitchen thing with [F].” – John

At Sundara teachers and crew are chosen for their ability to provoke transformation, as at Colourfest. They are prized for their commitment to certain norms of post-lineage yoga culture, as at Santosa. But some are also invited to inspire others to similar social justice projects.

In a quiet moment I visit a stone on site marking the spot where the man once known as the ‘King of the Hippies’ died (Worthington 2004: 46). His partner and a number of his children now manage the Rainbow Futures canvas infrastructure in his memory, erratically supported by a chosen family of friends who raised children together at the anarchic Welsh land project known as Tipi Valley. These camps are not only trading on the countercultural roots of British yoga outlined in my literature review, they are its continuation.



Sid’s stone and bronze Ganesh statue, Sundara

## Introducing key people

Above all, the communal rituals of post-lineage yoga are fuelled and inspired by the dedicated, long term practice of many of its key members: the yoga teachers, crew and musicians who gather each summer to share, work and “feed their souls”. From three specific camps, this thesis draws six case studies, teachers who embody key themes within post-lineage yoga, and are key actors in this subcultural network. All of them are dedicated practitioners and gifted teachers, but their inclusion here does not reflect any hierarchy of approval. Within the subculture they are well-known, and the data provides visual evidence of their practice and public teaching. As a result, it made most sense to us all to use their actual names here.

### Veronika de la Pena



I first met **Veronika** at Santosa, accompanied by her youngest children. At the age of 27, in chronic pain, she had her first experience of returning “to a place where [the] body feels good” with Sivananda Yoga, before finding Ashtanga (Vinyasa) Yoga, which is the style of yoga that still strongly influences the *āsana* part of her practice. She first

trained to teach as an Ashtanga teacher. For a number of years, she continued to practise and teach according to that lineage, but Ashtanga Yoga teachers are not usually taught a practice of seated meditation. Veronika’s independently held belief that every yoga teacher should also know how to meditate led her to her first **Vipassana** course (for a description of this popular Buddhist form of meditation see (Hart 2011)). At this point in effect she began combining practices from two lineages that each complemented the gaps she saw missing in the other. Her practice journey usefully demonstrates the compromises practitioners typically make between dedication to the teachings of one or more lineages and the various motivations behind personal innovations in practice.

“It totally blew my mind. [...] I practised every day. [...] I was becoming more equanimous, and more settled within myself.”

Living in Herefordshire, Veronika mostly still teaches Ashtanga Yoga, because it is much more popular in mainstream environments. But in contrast to those whom Veronika affectionately calls her “Ashtanga hopping bunnies”, her teaching at the camps is very different, slower and more mindful, characterised by a focus on lived experience and incremental kinesthetic transformation.

Veronika credits her Vipassana practice as giving her the psychological space to reform habits that “disturb the balance of [the] mind.” But she did not feel able to transfer this disciplined equanimity to others into teaching *āsana*, until a few years ago she discovered the little-known branch of Kashmir Yoga during a session on offer at the Santosa yoga camp. She says that Kashmir Yoga is “not so much a tool as an idea”, with a specific focus on experiencing the body during practice. Thus, as an experienced post-lineage teacher, Veronika at this point began to combine her in-depth knowledge of a small number of different styles into a hybrid teaching method that she felt would best serve both her own practice, and her students.

More recently still, Veronika and her collaborator, Nicole Zimbler, went beyond yoga culture entirely to develop a lay but informed understanding of infant neurology, and explore a therapeutic technique called the Rhythmic Movement Method, explained in Blomberg (2015). They were inspired by this to develop a practice that they call **Reflex Yoga**, and a further specialism for autistic populations seen on their website (Zimbler 2017). Now Veronika teaches both Kashmir and Reflex Yoga at the camps, and uses the post-lineage network to promote and develop their work with autistic populations.

Veronika is an accomplished teacher. Her taught practice consists of diagnostic movements to discern persistent and problematic neurological patterns, and movements designed to remove them. The practitioner builds their own practice, guided by the teacher to greater depths of internal awareness and discernment.

Even though she lives close to a few like-minded teachers, Veronika relishes the yoga camps for the profound sense of community they offer, and an ethical context that values frugality, compassion and ecology. She has been coming to Santosa for many years. A humanist, Buddhist ontology precludes her from fully engaging with the community *kīrtans* (devotional singing sessions). But she values close bonds with many in the subculture.

"It's the place where I fill myself up with all the energy I need to give back the yoga for the rest of the year."

Through her practice, and her involvement in the *saṃgha* (spiritual community) of post-lineage yoga culture, Veronika seeks a way of being in the world that embraces a tension between three poles: acceptance of life's impermanent, imperfect, uncomfortable beauty; an incremental reclamation of a pristine original body; and faith in an eventual evolution to perfected awareness. Quoting Paul Fleischman, she says

"You can never speak up too often for the love of all things", because "all things strive" (Fleischman 2016).

## Christopher Gladwell



I was introduced to **Christopher** by Uma Dinsmore-Tuli.

There are significantly fewer men than women attending or teaching at most camps, and he is one of the most well-known. Like Veronika, he first began as a student and teacher of Ashtanga Yoga, and his repertoire still holds many elements familiar to that system. After a similar journey to

Veronika, through an even wider number of schools, styles and systems, he too settled on a personal specialism that moves beyond, but still honours, various lineages and teachers. In his case, this led to the development of what he calls Engaged Yoga (Gladwell and Wender 2014), although again this name describes his personal teaching brand and is not a school that turns out regular generations of new teachers trained to replicate a set system. Engaged Yoga aims to be a fully holistic system for understanding and improving health and wellbeing, combining a range of philosophical, scientific and science-derived paradigms from Christopher's eclectic sources of inspiration. But although it aims to systematise, it does not make any claims to be the best or most correct form of yoga. Christopher has strong opinions on yoga, and indeed on life, relationships, and politics, but he holds the conviction that diversity and collaborative inspiration matter. Indeed, during the main fieldwork he was exploring collaborative co-teaching with Uma Dinsmore-Tuli, who has a very different practice indeed.

Christopher reads widely, and has written a number of books on yoga. He lives and works in Bristol, and teaches at low-impact retreat centres in Europe. He has not taught at Colourfest. At Sundara and Santosa he has been a charismatic presence and a high impact arrival, more likely to be engaged in intense debate than bonding over *sevā*. He is unselfconscious about his own practice, which is considered to be challenging. He practises publicly at the camp, and outside whenever he can, with as few barriers as possible between his body and the land, without the "insulation" of mats or structures other people might consider practical or comfortable. For him, teaching at camps and retreat centres promotes a porousness of practice to place, and of human to more than human presence.

All this combines in a reputation for innovation, erudition and intensity, but it is the conscious and unconscious maintenance of his charismatic energy, and its effect within the subculture that most interested me about his practice.

His own experience of yoga began with a back injury:

“I’d do visualisation practices [...]. And then moving in a way with my breath that felt right. [Then] somebody showed me a book with all these pictures of young people doing yoga and half the shapes I’d been making were in that book.”

Later, one yoga school he studied with placed “too much emphasis” on shoulder stands, another on long periods of sitting, both of which resulted in further injury. For Christopher, injury is a near inevitable occasional result of moving through the world with an incomplete understanding of how the body responds. Christopher has his own, very useful definition of the “guru principle”, and how we as students can find the ‘guru’ as knowledge variously embodied in an external teacher, internal awareness, specific method or the universe. Yet, as he says,

“There’s always that unknowingness which has to be engaged with in exploration, enquiry and dialogue.”

### Uma Dinsmore-Tuli



As is true for many people, Uma was my own gatekeeper into the network. I first met her at one of her *yoganidrā* training courses. She is the founder of the longest-running Santosa camp. Two other yoga camps (Sundara and Surya) have been founded by people who previously worked with her. A former Media Studies lecturer based between the

alternative communities of Stroud and Western Ireland, she maintains connections with teachers and scholars of yoga and Irish history alike, including friendships with a number of the Hatha Yoga Project team researching the pre-modern history of *āsana*.

She has been practising, and teaching for many years. When she was first a student, she would attend one studio teaching Sivananda Yoga, and another teaching Iyengar Yoga, and although she wasn’t the only student to do this, she remembers both schools disapproving of this blending of sources. After training to teach Iyengar and Sivananda Yoga in turn, she moved on again, into the Satyananda Yoga community, where she met her husband, Nirlipta Tuli, who had been raised in the lineage. Indeed, she and Nirlipta were married not just by Swami Satyananda, but at his behest. She was later asked to leave a Satyananda Yoga teacher training, as she tells it, for asking awkward questions. As described in Chapter 5, during my fieldwork a major scandal broke within the Satyananda lineage that had a profound personal and professional impact on Uma and Nirlipta. By this point, Uma’s work with pregnant and post-natal students had led to the creation of her own style of **Womb Yoga**, that aimed to

correct the bias she saw within yoga teaching and philosophy, towards male bodies and experiences. She has studied off and on for a number of years with Angela Farmer, another teacher exiled from lineage who is more influential than she is personally famous within European yoga culture, for, like Vanda Scaravelli, taking a perceived patriarchal practice of self-inquiry, and using it to explore the notion of the 'divine feminine' in movement practice. Angela Farmer, with her partner Victor van Kooten, were senior teachers of Iyengar Yoga, when Victor claims he was seriously hurt by Iyengar during a yoga practice, and it seems that both teachers were in some way blacklisted or denigrated by the Iyengar organisation in return. This history is difficult to evidence, as the couple are quite private about the details, but they are part of the self-told origin story of this post-lineage subculture, and the story of radical female teachers in particular, who do not just move on from lineage but rebel against it, is a common one here.

Uma and Nirlipta also collaborated on developing a 'Total Yoga Nidra' training school for *yoganidrā* that seeks to combine the insights of multiple lineages in a way that recognises the benefits, limitations, and reasons for differences between them. In all this innovation, Uma and Nirlipta draw from a wide range of sources, benefiting from friendships not just with yoga teachers of numerous lineages, but with Sanskrit scholars, yoga historians, activists, psychologists and other medical professionals.

At the camps, Uma teaches a highly recognisable practice. The unique circling refrain of hands and hips that form its core has spread through the post-lineage yoga camp culture from Uma's own Womb Yoga school (Dinsmore-Tuli 2013b). The quality of movement involved is entirely different from the linear and upright Mysore corpus, the precise internal oscillations of Angela Farmer seen in a film by Cummins (1997) and the drawings of van Kooten (1997), or the graceful flow of **Scaravelli-inspired Yoga** described in Scaravelli's own words (1991). It has more in common with the spontaneous ecstatic expressions of Sahaja Yoga (see details at (Dharma 2017)) and Kripalu Yoga (see details at (Health 2017)) as described on their respective websites. Like them, this is a practice out on the wild edges of Tantric-inspired communion, but here, as I will show, it coalesces into a ritualised, repeated form, rather than endless innovation. As a result, it is much easier to teach to others.

This is also a profoundly emplaced practice, even as it is overlain with echoes of other places. Her practice is made in and reaffirms particular landscapes: Glastonbury, the Burren, the hills above Stroud. Uma thus also describes her practice as 'Celtic', in her co-written, inspirational manifesto for a Celtic School of Yoga (Dinsmore-Tuli and Harrison 2015). But her lifework to



date is *Yoni Shakti* (Dinsmore-Tuli 2013b), a Tantric-inspired feminist guide to yoga that draws on little-known historical Tantric source materials.

As a response to the descriptions of *siddhis* or yogic superpowers described in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*, Uma has used the “wisdom goddesses” of Śakta Tantra as inspiration for her categorisation of female superpowers (Dinsmore-Tuli 2013: 225). These female proto-*siddhis* are based on natural, but not inevitable, female life events such as lactation and menopause. Uma considers them to be initiatory events with a capacity to provoke personal transformation. Uma is open about her role in this reimagining, whilst more commercially successful offerings of the ‘**divine feminine**’ are more likely to conflate the recently invented with long-standing traditions, as well as thoroughly essentialising gender and orientalisising Hinduism (Maya 2015; Mantin 2004: 215).

Affinity groups from attendees of Uma and Nirlipta's courses, and readers of her books, form their overlapping peer networks. At Santosa Uma is a source of inspirational chaos and a referent for final authority. Supporting this is her conscious and community-building habit of celebrating and recognising the talents of others. This is as true when acknowledging her own teachers, such as Angela Farmer, as it is when honouring the volunteers that make her events possible. She has been immensely supportive of this thesis project. Like many of the dedicated teachers in post-lineage yoga culture, she is respected, but not famous, and once laughingly declared that taking part in the research made her “feel more real as a result”.

### Sivani Mata Francis



Sivani Mata's journey to post-lineage yoga begins, like many, with Ashtanga Yoga. She left this behind in search of a practice that was less prescriptive, and more adaptable to her own biological rhythms, and trained with Uma. Having recently moved near to Uma, in Stroud, she now also travels to teach on both Total Yoga Nidra and Womb Yoga

workshops and courses, but she also leads her own retreats, and travels widely as a *bhakti* musician, leading *kirtan* on her own events and those of others. This brings her into collaboration with even more teachers, and a wide range of schools and influences. I met Sivani Mata through Uma, but spent most time getting to know her through camping side by side at Colourfest.

Alongside this journey of personal exploration, for many years, Sivani Mata has also identified as part of the **Babaji** lineage community, one of numerous Hindu saints known as Babaji whose

hagiography can be found at Samaj (2017), and she is one of the Babaji Temple Singers who lead *kīrtan*, ritual and events throughout the year. But in the absence of the physical presence of the (dead or ascended) guru, she, in line with post-lineage yoga culture, adapts her personal and taught practice as inspiration and experience dictate. The heart of Sivani Mata's practice as seen in the next chapter, is a *pūjā* form that is practised at all of the fieldwork camps. With that, as I will show, she blends Womb Yoga practices, *yoganidrā*, and her own *bhakti* songs. She is also trained to teach Shakti Dance, described earlier in this chapter. Shakti Dance is itself a blend of Kundalini Yoga with elements from ecstatic dance and other traditions, and thus, Sivani Mata chooses elements of practice day by day, from a range of the different sources that form her personal history of practice, to fit around her regular *pūjā* structure in ways that would contradict the direct teachings of most *bhakti* lineages.

As a result of her eclectic personal journey, Sivani Mata is involved in a number of key smaller affinity groups within the subculture. She is an established feature of both Colourfest and Santosa schedules. Her own music is inspired by relatively obscure *bhakti* poets such as the 11<sup>th</sup> Century Lalla Ded.

Her practice is most interesting because of how she blurs the boundary between *bhaktiyoga* and *āsana*, or yoga, music and dance. Prior to yoga, her countercultural roots lie in underground rave culture. The various events she teaches and performs at maintain her connections to all of these and more.

"I entered the jasmine garden  
where Śiva and Śakti were making love.

I dissolved into them

I dissolved into them." (Francis 2017 - based on a poem by Lalla Ded)

## Tanya Carter



Tanya's yoga history begins as a student of a local Hatha Yoga teacher. Later, a trip to India was inspired by a dream revelation: "I [...] was given two words. One was Navaratri and one was Babaji."

Whilst in India for the Navaratri celebrations at the Babaji ashram, she and her husband were then inspired to travel to Mysore and train as Ashtanga Yoga teachers. The *āsana* sequences and "strong connection[s]" that they learned and formed there sustained Tanya's teaching and practice for many years. Alongside this, she made connections to, and continues to spend time with the Babaji and also

Osho lineage communities, but committed exclusively to neither these, nor to the Ashtanga Yoga community. As part of her own journey into parenthood, she trained in Pregnancy yoga with Uma, and as a result, discovered the yoga camp network.

It was at Santosa yoga camp that Tanya first encountered Kundalini Yoga, and: “I knew that that was the yoga for me in that moment.” She trained to teach Kundalini Yoga, and now when she teaches, mostly teaches from that repertoire, adding in elements of Hatha Yoga and Ashtanga Yoga and more, whenever she feels it useful. But the teachers she invites to the camp she runs with John, her husband, teach in a wide range of more and less well-known styles, and show evidence of an eclectic range of sources, many of them obscure within mainstream yoga culture.

Tanya’s individual practice, her public image and her teaching are closely related, and I found the way she negotiates her relationship to different lineages extremely interesting. The method of Kundalini Yoga is much more foundational to Tanya’s practice than the ongoing authority of specific teachers who taught it to influence her practice. But Tanya perceives a certain authority in wiser beings who have walked the human journey before us. And the authority of the guru archetype for her is not restrained to lineage, nor to the ideal of rare beings with profound yogic knowledge. Anyone in the human family can be a teacher for her, and thus she believes that coming together in human community at these camps enables more of those inspirational encounters to happen. Tanya’s own first inspiration was her grandmother.

“There was [...] this absolute grace that I never saw in anybody else. [...] I think it was through her that I really knew that some people were different to others.”

Unusually among these case studies, Tanya has named no style of yoga, and written no books. Her focus is in developing and holding space for community, and like Uma, she is one of the most well-connected figures in the subculture. As well as organising Sundara, and working at Colourfest, John and Tanya also run a chai tea stall at other post-lineage events, often for charity, including the Beltane Bhakti Gathering mentioned later. The running of events is, as stated above, a long-held habit.

## Nicole Aarons



When **Nicole** began her yoga journey, Iyengar Yoga was “the only yoga in town”, and for many years, that is what she studied, and taught. What she describes as the “real rigour” of Iyengar, was supplemented by a later exploration of Ashtanga Yoga, again, as student and teacher. Both systems were important early steps on a long path that transcended

both schools. Although she now develops beyond any lineage or school other than her own method, and states that the only authority over her practice is her “internal awareness of energy”, Nicole expresses modified respect for those who still defer to external authority.

Her own personal narrative describes a wild and possibly unsafe female body that encountered much-needed strict paternal alignment and discipline through Iyengar and Ashtanga Yoga. She then passed through multiple yoga schools, each of them conferring different physical or esoteric gifts, leading to growing intuition and self-reliance. It is, as I have said, a familiar story within the wider post-lineage subculture.

Nicole’s most significant influence today is the founder of the more obscure school of **Shadow Yoga**, Shandor Ramete (see his website here ('Shadow Yoga' 2017)). Shadow Yoga is characterised by non-linearity and a fluidity of movement with strength more familiar from martial arts than yoga. Shadow Yoga practitioners are encouraged to individualise the system as it is taught to them, and eventually expected to develop their own personalised *āsana* sequences for their own practice and teaching. As I will show, Nicole’s is a diverse and unusual one as a result.

Nicole’s love of the more esoteric and internally transformative aspects of contemporary yoga also combines with a number of “shamanic” trainings external to yoga culture. Her definition of this work hovers between the conception of emplaced negotiations with other than human beings common to the descriptions of many indigenous peoples, and the modern interpretation of core shamanism as internal healing through archetypes.

Her eclectic practice sources culminate in her own style, which she calls Soma Yoga. It is the innovative nature of that style, as well as her long history and multiple connections within the subculture, which led me to approach her first at Santosa. Spiced with the hypnotic cadences and unusual paraphernalia of her shamanic practice, Nicole tailors esoteric and folkloric fragments from South Asian, Celtic and South American cultures to fit woven narratives of

healing for self and a more than human world (Aarons 2017). Her radical syncretism resonates with her own multi-cultural heritage.

Over time, some teachers become so unique that they are largely inimitable, even as they, like Nicole, begin training other teachers in their methods. Taking trainings with them is not the initiation into an organisational hierarchy and affiliation to a set and systematised practice common to most modern yoga brands. It is more about learning their practice in order to see if there are elements one would wish to incorporate into one's own. As a result, styles proliferate, most teachers combine a small number of influences into their own blend, and practitioners attend camps such as these to explore not just different ways of practising, but the different worldviews, and diverse personal histories inherent in each teacher's practice.

Despite decades of experience as both practitioner and teacher, Nicole claims enduring surprise when new students seek her out, and feels herself unsuited to commercial success. Like many of my respondents, Nicole is much more comfortable talking of specific, long-standing "kinship" relationships. She teaches at all of my fieldwork sites, and speaks fondly of Christopher, Uma and others who are key figures in local post-lineage yoga transmission.

Of all the case studies, she embodies one impossible ideal of post-lineage yoga culture: that of separating from the mundane and commercial world. Beyond her courses and sporadic Facebook updates, her media and social media presence is minimal.

"The winds of change are blowing us along new currents and we feel it in our sacred, secret beautiful heart. We need a maker of islands to hold us safe and offer us refuge."  
(Aarons 2017)

## Conclusion

Besides these six case studies, a few other key figures and events are mentioned by name in the course of this thesis. Throughout the fieldwork, I met teachers, crew and musicians who were Sanskrit scholars, independent researchers and philosophers. All these people were highly educated, widely read, or simply profoundly experienced in decades of practice. As organisers of Colourfest, both Rowan and Robbie, for example, have their own complex histories and depths of applicable knowledge. I could have chosen them or a number of other people as case studies, and given more time and space, I would have done so.

Apart from Rowan and Robbie, I interviewed **Ian**, who is quoted later, because his One Spirit Ashram Kitchen is a fascinating development that connects the camps to much bigger activist networks. Although he does practise and teach an interesting synthesis of Ashtanga, Hatha and

Kundalini Yoga, he does so much more occasionally, focusing recently on his ministry for the One Spirit Interfaith network, an organisation for holistic interfaith ministry. He is included here as a key figure within the network, but his individual practice was not the most relevant for a case study.

Also mentioned by name is **Trishula**, the organiser of her own event, the Beltane Bhakti Gathering. She is a key figure within the community, and her husband is a well-known *bhakti* musician and producer. Together they model and promote inter-lineage collaboration and the importance of both social justice and service. Understanding Trishula's role is instrumental in understanding both the specificity of this subculture, and the wider processes of post-lineage collaboration. Yet her individual practice focuses almost exclusively on *bhakti*, and my case studies are confined to those practitioners that integrate *bhakti* with a more eclectic practice including *āsana*, breath work and meditation, as this is more representative of this subculture.

Each individual finds their own way to relate to the post-lineage network in practice, affinity, authority and knowledge. As I will show, the subculture evolves at least in part through a series of revelations and disillusionments, each shared by a few and supported by the many. Inevitably some leave the networks entirely, and some find other, hopefully more reliable or at least relatable teachers, as did Trishula:

“When Babaji came into my life there was a card, I picked a card of his sayings and the card was 'be ordinary' and I really loved that.”



## 5. Common subcultural features

The previous chapter gave a flavour of three specific, vibrant post-lineage events through their history, networks and norms, as well as a sense of the embodied experience of attending the camps, through land, food, clothing and practice. It also presented the key people who will be cited throughout the thesis to follow. In this chapter, I return to my fieldwork data in a preliminary analysis of those subcultural features that demonstrate post-lineage diversity, and those that serve to sustain a sense of coherent culture and community from camp to camp.

On one reading of the data, Colourfest serves the post-lineage community by bringing more mainstream yoga practitioners into easy contact with a less well-known diversity of teachers. Here lineage and post-lineage, yoga and dance, weave and meet at its many collaborative offerings. In the process, as elsewhere in contemporary yoga, *āsana*, meditation and dance become porous categories (Jacobs 2017: 4), in service to the larger aim of euphoric self-transformation. Santosa's purpose is more inwardly focused. From *yoganidrās* to retellings of the origins of yoga, stories fill the space and mythologise the camp's own history. As I will show in later chapters, such storytelling is a key process for both post-lineage and some modern postural yoga subcultures. But this camp as a whole performs a specific narrative, told by and for this particular post-lineage counterculture. Santosa reassures people who feel on the edges of the communities they teach in that they are not alone, and that solidarity and a simpler, more sustainable, more sattvic (balanced) way of life is possible. Sundara, the youngest of three events, is a tribe of tribes, one meeting point in the semi-nomadic British festival summer. It brings together post-lineage practitioners with a number of other countercultural affinity groups. Of all the three, it is the most consciously built in the hope of better futures, with the labour of refugee activists and *bhakti* charities, from blueprints provided by traveller camps and intentional communities.

If Colourfest bridges the mainstream with the post-lineage community, and Sundara links the same post-lineage community with the counterculture, Santosa is perhaps the most focused on serving this specific post-lineage community itself. And yet each of these descriptions can to a lesser extent be applied to the other camps, and more events besides. Thus, each event, like each key figure, will have its own role, and its own personality. But within that diversity are core processes of inter-relationship that would be expected in any post-lineage subculture.



## How the subculture relates to lineage

The relationship between political or social radicalism, activist engagement and questioning lineage is complex in post-lineage subcultures. Each key character negotiates a unique journey of collaboration and individual expression, both conforming to and questioning the norms that they receive from their teachers, and the wider culture. In this subculture, for example, the major influences of Ashtanga, Iyengar and Sivananda Yoga are still present, particularly in the shapes and names of the static postures we can see in Lutz (2015). But absent is the common sectarianism of their adherents that disapproves of any innovation that cannot be directly tied to lineage. Lineage is one of numerous significant sources of practice, but those who are most convinced of its absolute authority are least likely to be comfortable in a post-lineage environment.

Interestingly, the practitioners in this subculture are more likely than many to have had contact with “the charismatic authority of the living guru” (Singleton and Goldberg 2013b: 5), in the search for a more authentic connection to the practice. But they are also more likely to take issue with the institutionalisation of authority, and more likely to have suffered adverse experiences as a result. Between Colourfest, Santosa and Sundara, those gurus that are still celebrated include Sri Haidakhandi Babaji (one of numerous Hindu saints known as Babaji, referenced in the quotation from Trishula in the previous chapter), and Mata Amritanandamayi (one of several Hindu saints known as Amma). It is telling that these lineages strongly emphasise devotional service (*sevā*), humility and communal acts of worship rather than physical or meditational practice. Their devotees are more common in the ranks of volunteers than teachers, and thus in a position of offering service rather than authority over knowledge production. This is not to say that these lineages are entirely non-hierarchical, but those of their devotees who engage in this, and theoretically other post-lineage subcultures, are those who take the injunction to serve humanity regardless of religious affiliation most to heart.

There are less well-known postural lineages with a strong presence at these specific camps, including Kundalini Yoga, which focuses on esoteric transformation, through the medium of *mantra* and breath manipulation (as shown below), as much as through *āsana*. It also includes Integral Yoga, which promotes an integrated, non-sectarian spiritual practice, Yin Yoga, which uses long holds to release physical tension and psychological trauma, and the various divine feminine styles inspired by the work of Vanda Scaravelli (1991) and Angela Farmer, as profiled in Cummins (1997). Gurus whose lineages emphasise more physical and meditational practices are much less likely to be a focus for allegiance or worship here, although images of Yogi

Bhajan (Kundalini Yoga) and Swami Satchidananda (Integral Yoga) in particular may be found on altars.

In general, a mutual respect for practitioners of other lineages or none at all is greatly encouraged, and would seem to be a prerequisite for those extra-lineage relationships on which post-lineage yoga is founded, and within which those who have rejected lineage entirely can find an equal welcome. This lack of proselytization is vital, given that equally numerous within the community are those whose encounters with lineage and guru have been significantly more negative. There is little open discussion within the community of specific scandals unless they have recently become common subcultural knowledge. There is, for example, little reference made to revelations that the history of Kundalini Yoga is significantly more recent, constructed, and even revised than the lineage's own narratives claim (Deslippe 2012: 371). Nor does the community openly discuss the multiple public allegations of criminal activity by its founder (Remski 2018a).

But during the fieldwork, a major investigation broke into child abuse within the **Satyananda Yoga** lineage, a lineage inspired by the teachings of Swami Satyananda (for details see Remski (2014a)). Within this subculture, the allegations were discussed, and the resulting shared grief was palpable among devotees and non-devotees alike, especially at Santosa. Satyananda Yoga is one of the main sources for the original development of modern *yoganidrā* (Birch and Hargreaves 2015b). And as fieldwork came to a close, allegations of sexual assault by the founder of Ashtanga (Vinyasa) Yoga began to resurface after years of persistent rumours (Remski 2018b).

Devotees of all lineages and none thus practise together. Continued adherence to lineage is rarely used to decide practice, but does create closer affinity groupings within the wider network, and so contributes to the specific flavour of individual events and even subcultures as a whole. In this, it is possible that the more democratised and outward-focused lineage practices of devotional yoga are an influential model for the changing nature of authority within post-lineage *āsana* practice. One couple who are both activists and *bhakti* musicians discuss how access to all the practices shared at post-lineage yoga events is available regardless of affiliation or experience, saying: "I think in the whole movement, and you're talking about the yoga, in it, there's this fluidity." There are no attempts to convert people to specific lineages, and no difference in status between the more or less devoted, and this is vital to the underlying processes. As one Babaji ritualist described it, the commitment devotees wish to inspire in others is not to a guru, but "to truth, simplicity and love". At Colourfest, Rowan publicly compares his relationship with Swami Satchidananda to the individual journey

of each attendee who can explore: “your own way of reaching the silence...the peace...the heart”.

## Some commonly shared forms of movement

My fieldwork data provided far too wide a diversity of practice to attempt a complete catalogue of all the practices of movement and stillness taught at the camps. Any taught session at any post-lineage event can contain any combination of static postures, rhythmic movement, partner work, relaxation, contemplation, esoteric visualisation, chant and poetry. Each session is created from a half-hidden palimpsest of sources. One teacher at Santosa describes her teaching as a “brew of Tantra with Scaravelli”, but there are *āsana* postural sequences familiar from both the commonly taught Vinyasa Yoga (both a branded and generic term for movement-focused *āsana*, often set to music) and Uma’s own Womb Yoga in the session. In another relaxation session I recognise the distinctive phrase “a radiant orb of sensation” from the American *yoganidrā* teacher, Richard Miller (2010).

Yet within the shared repertoire of *āsana* in particular, I identified many common bodily shapes in the movements that are taught, and some were allied to common intentions. Gestures of bowing are often associated with surrender. Gestures of opening and closing the arms and linear spinal waves are often associated with breath and the heart, as seen in the dance session in fig. 7. Movements that involve stepping and lunging are associated with change and willpower. These bodily shapes were common not just to *āsana* teaching, but other movement sessions, and also emerged as part of spontaneous movements during *bhakti* and other communal activities.



Fig. 7a. Sundara: Opening and closing the arms

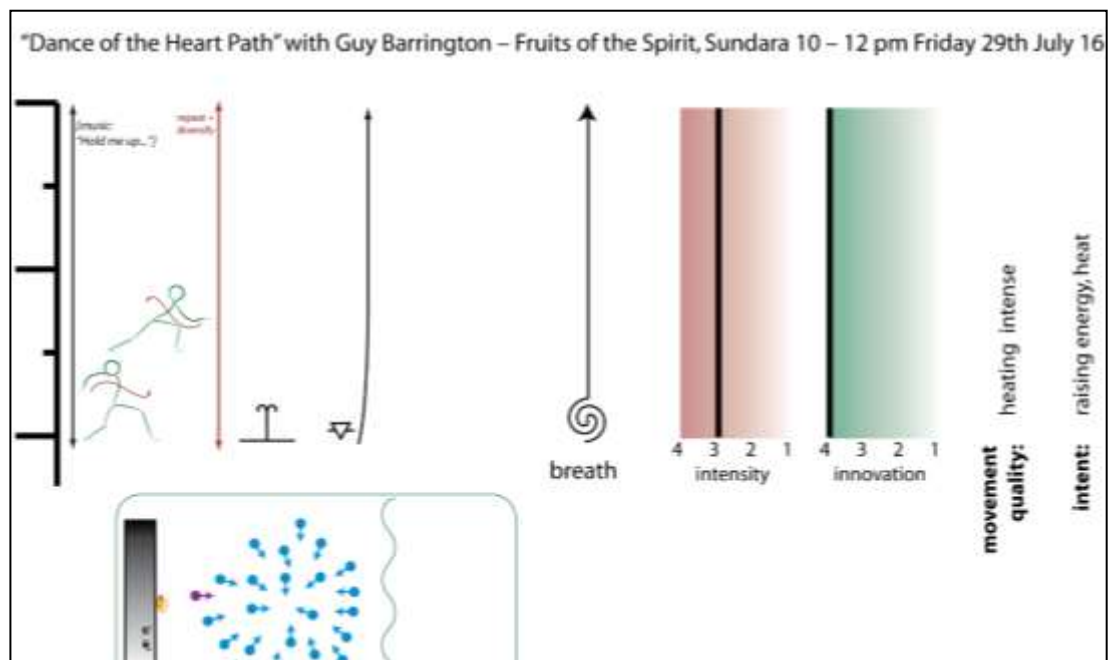


Fig. 7b. Sundara: Opening and closing the arms

Taught *āsana* elements that are designed to provoke a challenge include balances, contorting the limbs, movements engaging the core muscles of the torso, and movements that involved repetition or long holds. Challenging moves are experienced as more performative than contemplative, and likely to be accompanied by moments of communal humour, as when one teacher encourages participants to smile whilst the group holds a long squat, in fig. 8.



Fig. 8a. Colourfest: Smiling in squats

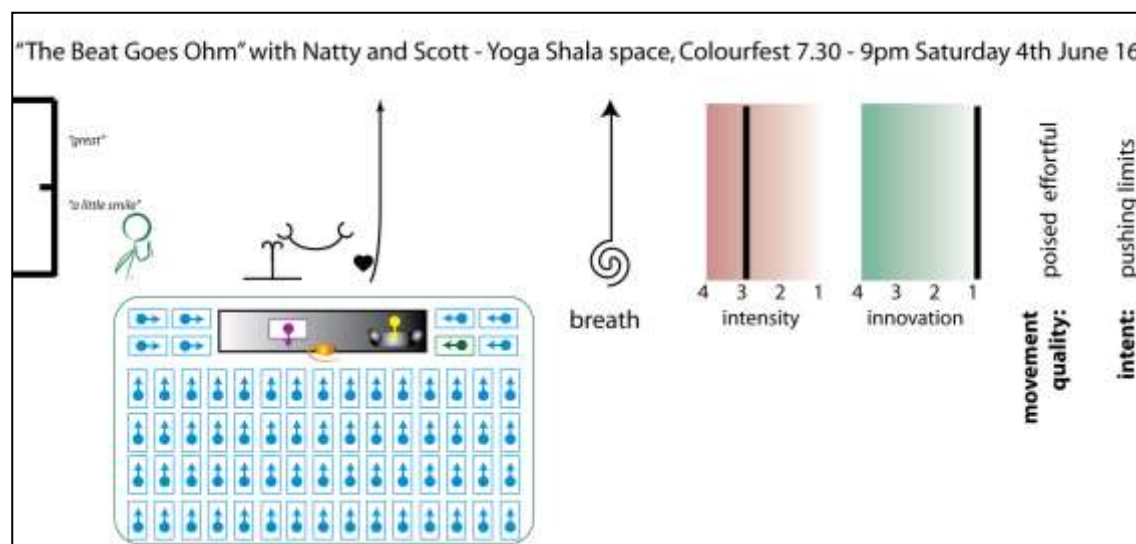


Fig. 8b. Colourfest: Smiling in squats

The instructions for each *āsana* may focus on specific body parts, most commonly the hands, feet, heart or spine. *Āsanās* may also be associated with specific bodily structures, most commonly muscles, joints, fascia, nerves or the more esoteric features of energetic network anatomy such as *nāḍīs* (channels) or *cakras* (major nodes). Individual teachers will show preferences for working with some or more of these.

More eclectic inspiration for the shared *āsana* repertoire is found in the camps' more diverse offerings of acrobatics, Contact Improvisation, martial arts, voice and dance, and fragments from these find their way into most post-lineage yoga teachers' repertoires. Some hybrid styles are found on the schedules, such as the Shakti Dance sessions detailed previously, and Chi Yoga, which combines the flowing movements of yoga *vinyāsa* (moving) styles with more oscillating, back and forth movements from the Chinese martial art and energy practice, *qigong*. Each of these influences contributes to the *specific* practice repertoire of each individual, the event, and the subculture, but the *processes* of creating a shared, peer-dependent repertoire are more universal.

Much of this shared language of and about movement, intention and bodily experience will have its sources in more mainstream yoga practices, but they evolve and proliferate rapidly within the specific subcultural ecology in ways that each chapter of this thesis will examine more fully. The subculture has its own, ever evolving typologies for describing, understanding, and thus categorising the resulting repertoire, drawn from elemental and Ayurvedic categories based on the qualities of earth, water, fire, air and aether. Taught practices are also often described as more 'masculine' or 'feminine'. These are emic terms I shall return to. Feminine practices are seen as more nurturing, gentle, and self-accepting. Masculine, self-improving

practices are characterised by more effortful and uprising forms. These can be combined. Shakti Dance for example combines the focus of Kundalini Yoga with expressive dance. One Shakti Dance teacher at Sundara describes the practice in self-accepting terms:

“What we're doing is allowing the waves, the energetic waves within the physical form, within the energy body, within the mental body, to come into greater harmony and flow” –

Whilst in a Shakti Dance session at Colourfest, the instruction suggests a much more directed, martial intent:

“Hands like swords. Getting ready. You are focussing to cut your limitations, your attachments. Slow motion. Really sharp.”

In both taught sessions and individual practices, we find *āsana* postures from the Mysore lineages detailed in Singleton (2010), that have universally familiar names, such as cat, dog and tree poses. Staying mostly within this repertoire allows teachers of the faster, more flowing styles common at Colourfest to teach sequences without the need for extensive verbal instruction. It is assumed that each participant will know how to move into their appropriate version of downward-facing dog, for example. The teacher can then add more specific instructions, as does the teacher in fig. 9 (over page). This is a methodology shared by many urban yoga studios and mainstream yoga events, where a common if limited repertoire of practice is assumed.

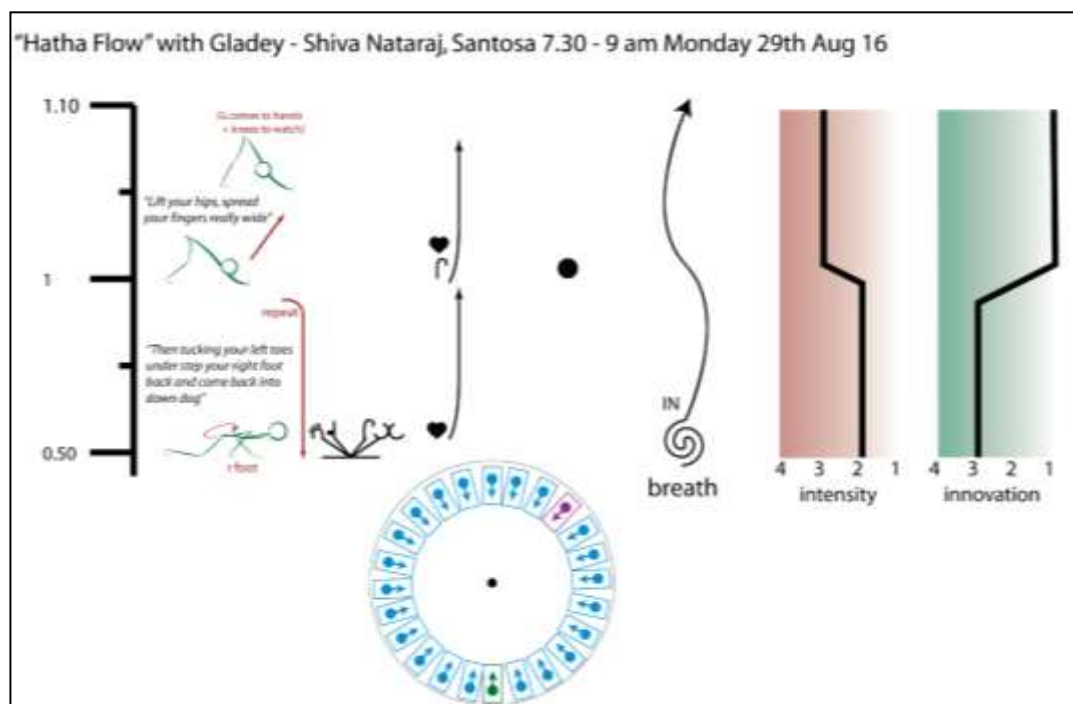


Fig. 9. Santosa: Downward-facing dog

Other postural shapes and sequences are variable signifiers dependent on each person's practice history. *Sūrya namaskāra* is a prostration sequence of early modern origin (Singleton 2010: 124), that almost all contemporary yoga students know. Beyond the basic postural waypoints, it has many variations, any one of which a teacher may consider to be foundational, depending on how they were originally taught the sequence. Besides this, the intent of each posture can differ, and the instruction that accompanies it may caution against alignment mistakes that another school embraces as orthopraxy. Some, for example, give detailed alignment instructions for the whole body, as in a The Beat Goes Ohm session at Colourfest: "Looking forward. Lifting the heart. Try not to work the lumbar too deeply. More in the chest." Others might concentrate mostly on the body's foundations and relationship with gravity, as Uma describes here:

"If you pay attention to what people's feet do, you don't need to give them instructions for pelvic movement because the pelvis does the thing for them that is going to be right anyway."

Practice styles that embrace more unusual movements, further from the mainstream consensus, correspondingly spend more time on basic instruction, but are also likely to have unusual intentions. This includes the often-unique Kundalini Yoga *kriyās* or cleansing practices.

The developers of more 'feminine' styles are wary of detailed direction entirely. The resulting repertoire of practice includes few static postures, and moves almost constantly in rhythmic circles and pulsations. As one of Scaravelli's students writes: "the spine acts and moves like an organ on its own, free [...] independent with a snake-like, wave-like movement." (Sabatini and Heron 2006: 34). These practices are also more likely to be taught with the students and teacher together in a circle, rather than the teacher facing students that are arrayed in lines. The intent is to nourish a desire for individualised, expressive movement, and we can see in fig. 10, how these teachers suggest multiple options that defer to the authority of each person's needs.

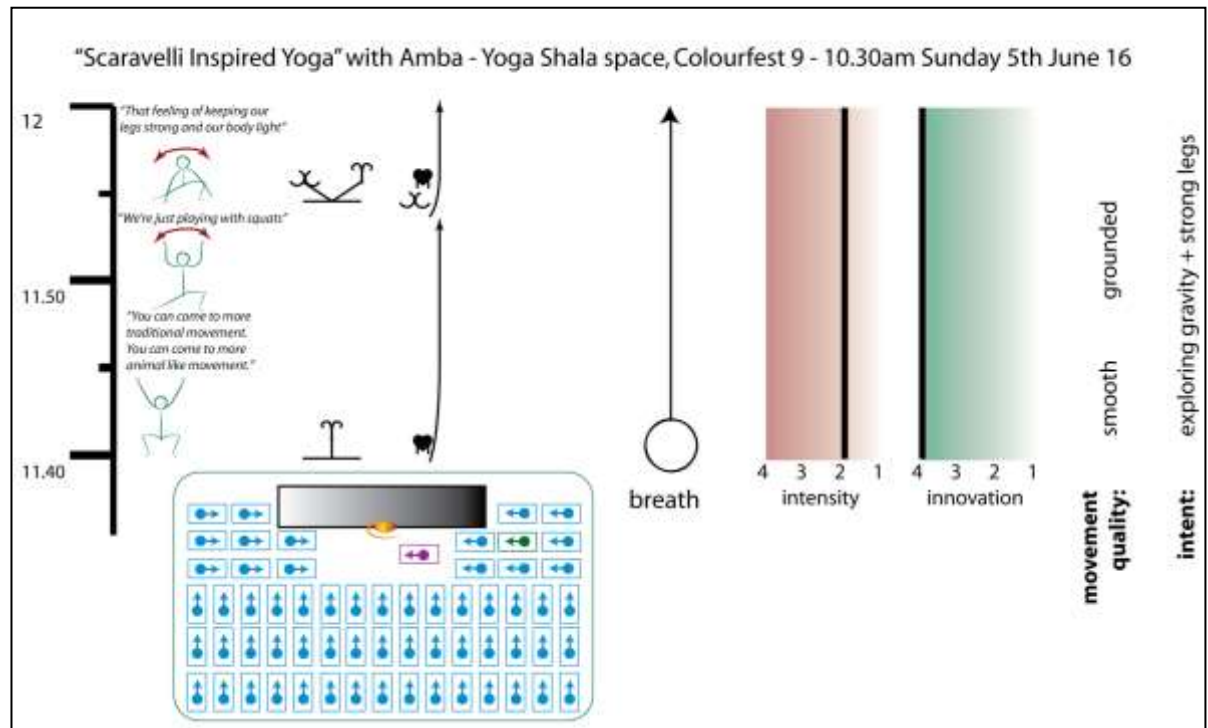


Fig. 10. Colourfest: Encouraging choice

Most sessions taught at the camps follow a wave of effort or common rhythm familiar from the evening *kīrtans* led by *bhakti* singers: slowly rising in intensity before falling back into stillness. This is a form that will be retraced in the case study practices. The ability to teach in this way contributes to the immersive experience of participants, and the possible peak experiences afforded at the height of physical intensity, just as a DJ's choice of music enables the peak experiences of a rave.

In reality, although it is possible to label many sessions with distinct styles, inspiration across school, intention and lineage is pervasive. There is also no clear line to separate the movement repertoires and references of modern postural from post-lineage yoga in general, or in the specific subculture under consideration. But what is definitional to post-lineage yoga as a whole is the prevalence of peer-based practice evolution, where teachers learn from each other, students are encouraged to individualise practice, and the roles of teacher and student (and indeed trainer of teachers) are not permanently assigned, but lightly held in turn. At these camps, teaching collaborations are now increasingly common, further decentralising the traditional position of the single teacher as a source of authority to determine practice. The unsystematised, informal diversity and unique flavour of each post-lineage subcultural practice repertoire arises from the many ways in which practice is shared unencumbered by lineage affiliation, teaching hierarchy, bureaucratic oversight or brand copyright.



As well as the multiply-led dance session at Colourfest that is described in Chapter 4, Santosa hosted one such collaboration between Uma Dinsmore-Tuli, originator of her own Womb Yoga style, and Christopher Gladwell, a former Ashtanga devotee. The sessions were framed in highly eclectic terms: with reference to Hindu and East Asian cosmology as a dance of 'Śiva' and 'Śakti', and the masculine 'yang' and feminine 'yin'. They contained some practices that toned the body and enervated the nervous system, others that encouraged rest and recovery, and some that investigated the boundaries between the two. The dance between 'masculine' and 'feminine', effort and acceptance, was embodied in the way Chris ('C' in fig. 11) and Uma ('U' in fig. 11) responded to each other in their instructions.

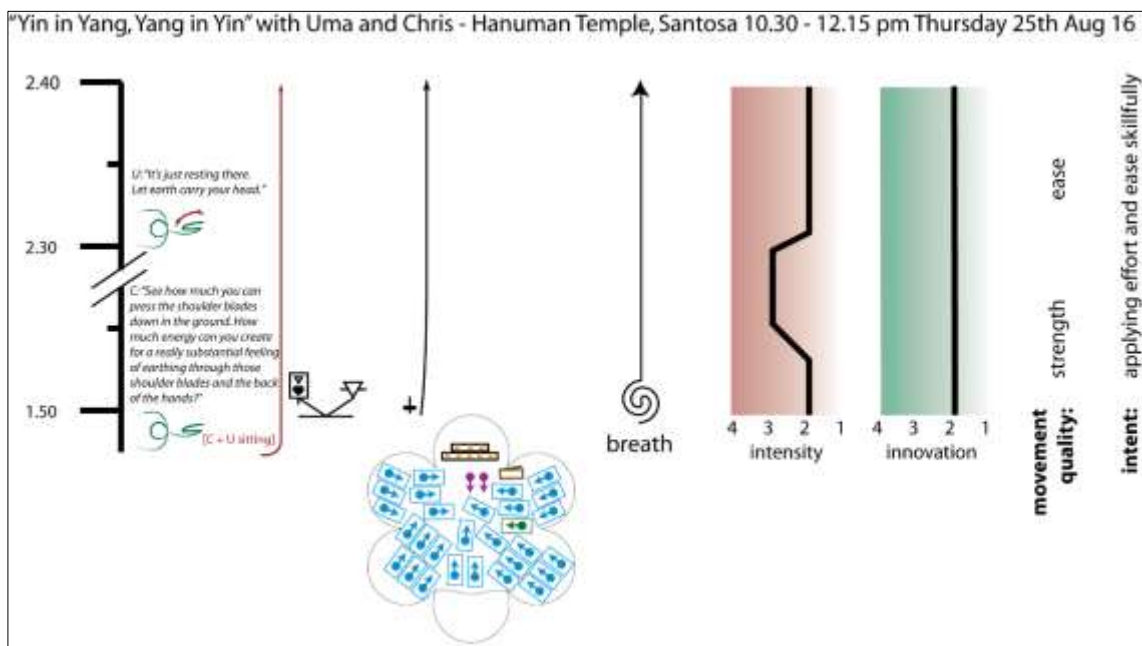


Fig. 11. Santosa: Balancing 'Śiva' and 'Śakti'

## The porousness of ecological space and its effects on the practice

However it is taught, each session happens in a specific space, with the group moving synchronously, if not identically, together. Each camp's ecology also plays a vital role in individualising specific iterations of post-lineage practice and culture. As Sandra Sabatini, student of Vanda Scaravelli, writes: "when standing, the spine moves and extends, between the ground below and the sky above, and the body fits into this dimension" (2006: 114).

Every event organiser negotiates the compromises inherent in entering into landscapes marked by prior use. Colourfest must integrate into grounds without damaging landscaping.

The shape of Sundara is dependent on the structures their hosts provide. Santosa is marked by its proximity to Glastonbury as a town and festival.

“I've been to yoga festivals where it's been cold, wet, windy. The marquees haven't been bolted down properly and the capacity to grow and learn in that environment is more difficult because you're just trying to get your basic needs met.” – Rowan, organiser of Colourfest



Fig. 12a. Santosa: Escaping boundaries

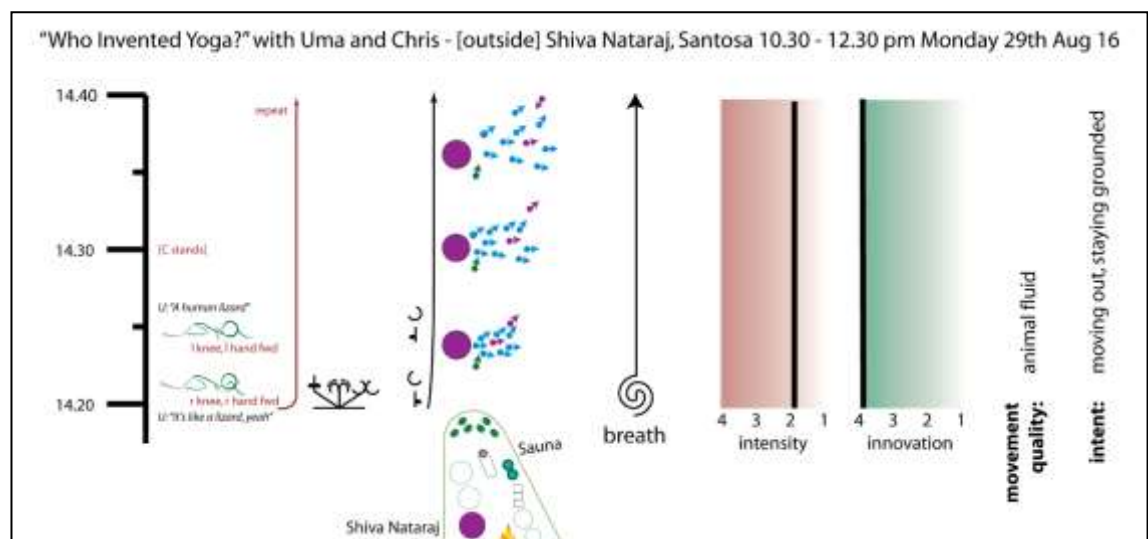


Fig. 12b. Santosa: Escaping boundaries

The camps are bounded by the short British summer. Autumn and winter are dreaming seasons for the culture, where little happens, and early spring marks the start of negotiations with the land and its gatekeepers. Unpredictable weather fosters practices of accommodation, adaptation and diversity. The confused jumble of footwear outside each practice space changes with the weather, and creeps across the boundary inside when it rains. Yoga sessions at the camps are more likely to be vigorous when the weather is damp or cold, and escape their allotted canvas spaces to stretch on the grass when the sun shines, as in Uma and Chris' session in fig. 12, on the previous page. Ecology inspires the content, and shapes the context of many sessions.

Practices with descriptions such as ‘natural’ or ‘authentic movement’ are scheduled into the wilder spaces at the edge of camps. Santosa’s emphasis on peer-to-peer networking is reflected in the circularity of its canvas practice domes. Nonetheless, engagement with the shape of a space is negotiable. Some teachers, like the one fig. 13, teach in front of Colourfest’s low stages rather than on them. Each teacher has to take possession of the space in which they teach in their own way.

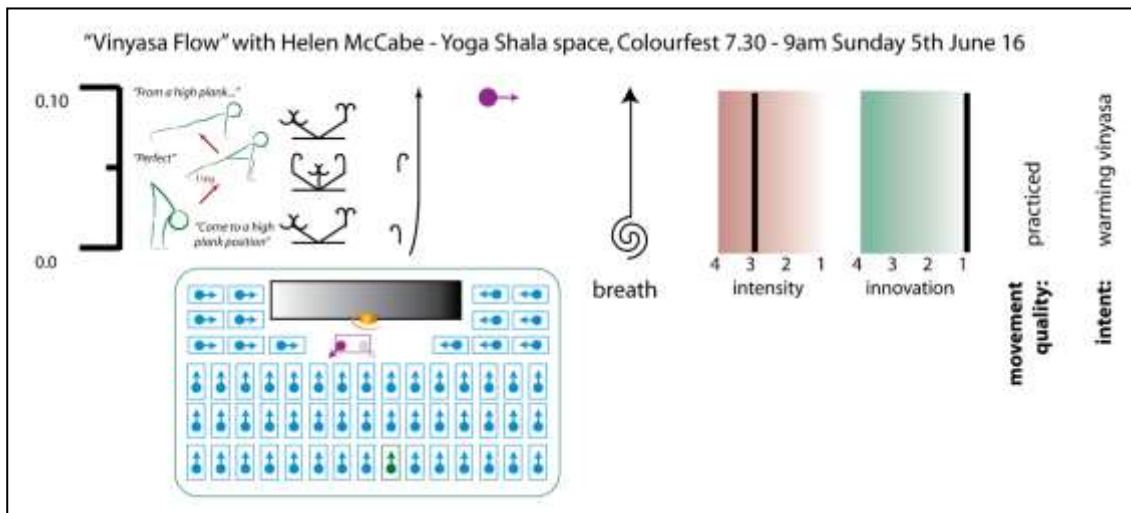


Fig. 13. Colourfest: Taking possession of the space

Meanwhile, participants move fluidly from one space to another. They wander in and out of workshops that have been only briefly described. As timings slip and schedules evolve, they find themselves in practices they didn't so much choose as a consumer, but come across as explorers in an imperfectly mapped land. As a result, innovation and cross-pollination are inevitable. That transmission becomes osmotic given the porousness of the canvas spaces themselves. Time and again the soundtrack of one session becomes the background of another.

Popular sessions spill out, as at Nicole's Soma Yoga session at Colourfest, in fig. 14 (over page). Here, once the space was full, people gathered outside to practise out of earshot, copying those closer in a kinetic version of a game of whispers. The gong bath in the tent next door provided a fitting substitute for Nicole's narrated final relaxation.



Fig. 14. Colourfest: Teaching with osmosis

At Santosa, as some lay in the sun during a break in the women's sauna session, others began, still naked, to copy and explore the shapes being made by Chris and Uma's Śiva and Śakti session across the site. Not all such crossovers are welcomed. Dance sessions that include amplified music are carefully scheduled and openly challenged because of their tendency to bleed into other sessions that involve contemplative stillness.

As porous and temporary as these practice spaces are, each mat, each structure, holds a long weight of history to those at the heart of the community. Their fragile, negotiated borders mark the boundaries of authority, of meaning, and of home. A post-lineage subculture that does not need to concentrate its communal activities into a few short months of the year might be more diffuse, and less coherent. One that shares its practice in more constructed, less porous spaces might have clearer divisions between its composite affinity groups, and less serendipity in how each practitioner finds new sources of inspiration.

As Andrea Jain writes: "a nondual metaphysics – a denial of the fundamental difference between the material world and the sacred world – characterizes postural yoga culture" more generally (2014a: 104). And David Abrams writes of an "'intelligence [that] is no longer ours alone but is a property of the earth; we are in it, of it, immersed in its depths'" (Abrams 1986:105 in Fisher 2013: 12). Within many sessions at these camps, bodies *become* ecology, from the 'petals' or 'lotus' of the heart to the 'wings' of the arms and 'roots' of fingers and toes reaching into the earth. Those *āsanas* with common names of natural origins become more extended metaphors, as when exploring the psychologised quality of rootedness standing on one leg in *vrkṣāsana* (tree pose). This intimacy of ecology to practitioner is one I will return to with reference to individual practice in the next chapter. Here, in the porousness of ecology and person, human and more than human agency, the camp community enacts and reinforces its relationship to the land. Over time, from Sundara to Colourfest to Santosa, each site is reformed to reflect the enduring relationship between the British landscape and its inhabitants (Johnson 2002a: 305), in which metaphysical power is repeatedly bound into location, but also into bodies.

## How the subculture negotiates with its ontological diversity

Some scholars claim that for most contemporary yoga practitioners, the healthy body is a final goal (Jain 2014a: 62), and yet emic accounts of contemporary yoga often make such statements as: “if we dedicate ourselves to practice, it is only a matter of time until the mat becomes an altar” (Cope 1999: 269). Without a baseline of evidence to measure from, it is unclear whether post-lineage yoga is inherently more or less religious in its intentions than either commercial brands or orthodox approaches to lineage, even if a metric for such religiosity could be agreed. But logically, we could expect a comparative survey of post-lineage subcultures to demonstrate a diversity in the levels of devotional intent, equivalent to the diversity of practice itself.

Within this subculture, each of these camps do contain overtly religious content. Their sites are, for some of the community, sites that are constantly being remade as sacred by the movement and activities of people within them (Miles-Watson 2016: 39). At Colourfest and Sundara there are altars in teaching and performance spaces, whilst Santosa’s Bhakti Temple is a multi-lobed yurt at the heart of the site, in which can be found, as Uma describes it, “this amazing altar with everything that anyone thinks is holy is welcome up there.”

These altars contain multiple *mūrtis* (divine representations) in the form of statues and images. As in traditional Hinduism, *mūrtis* are considered to be living incarnations of deities and gurus, with agency and needs. At Santosa, they are washed, anointed and fed daily, before taking their place among objects of natural beauty. The relationship between self and *mūrti* here is a complex one, in which the actions of cleansing and offering nourishment are seen by many as actions of cleansing and offering nourishment to aspects of divinity reflected in the mundane self, or in the inherent non-dual divinity of all matter.



Kṛṣṇa being bathed at Santosa, fire *pūjā* at Sundara

Individual devotees and camp participants will vary in their metaphysical understanding of such ritual acts, but the widespread inclusion of *mūrtis* on camp altars confirms their centrality to devotional life here.

Whilst *pūjās* that include more substantial offerings to *mūrtis* may happen once or twice during each event, the devotional singing practices called *kīrtans* are scheduled multiple times a day, and many ritualists are also devotional or *bhakti* musicians. As elsewhere, *kīrtan* here is a populist religious practice, one that is “improvised and situational” (Orsi 2012: 151-2). It moves through a rising tempo of repetition into a hypnotic and ecstatic liminal state often described as “heart-opening”. The *kīrtan* chants are created through the lyrical, often call and response repetition of the names of divine beings (Pettit 2014: 14). This practice of naming as honouring is echoed at many camps with open morning meetings, in which each person present is also greeted by name and a ‘*namaste*’. At Santosa this daily community ritual is even referred to as “reciting the holy names”. All these devotional attitudes: to land, to people, to diverse representations of the divine, serve to enhance and honour the connections between them, and to apply a shareable vocabulary to the intimate and evolving individual ontologies that are explored in individual practice. *Bhakti* is therefore a vital aspect to this post-lineage subculture.

There are significant differences within such religious content however. At Colourfest, religious references and communal practices tend to have more neo-Vedantic content, bringing in revered teachers to give lectures to attendees. At Sundara, where the content of sessions is the most eclectic, inspired by more (core) shamanic and New Age practices, teachers tend to assume a familiarity with crystal healing, energetic alignments, and other New Age epistemologies. And at Santosa, the taught content includes more European pagan, but also more Tantric references. Key figures who attend Santosa are more likely to have direct connections with both contemporary India, and a certain familiarity with ancient and historic sources. A number of them can read Sanskrit to some level.

Although these are communal religious activities and discussions, the specific ontological orientations of individual organisers and attendees are diverse, and frequently obscured in public speech. A multiplicity of Hindu, Buddhist and pagan gods, gurus, saints and *bodhisattvas* are involved in morality references, mythological story-telling, *kīrtan* invocation and ritual *pūjās*. But these are placeholder terms for what are often private metaphysical attitudes. Glossing belief whilst continuing to involve the gods in worship and teaching allows participants to approach every figure on the altars as either a living deity, an incarnated natural force, an abstracted human concept or an aspect of a single god. But those attendees

whose practice does not include ecstatic devotion of any kind can feel marginalised for having no connection to *bhakti* at all. Nonetheless, the overall religious attitude of this subculture is henotheistic: accepting of other deities and concepts of god whilst retaining personal devotional allegiances. Given the eclectic nature of post-lineage yoga in principle, a tendency to henotheism and inclusive language is likely to be a common feature of its subcultures.

Within this specific subculture, the person of the guru is always absent, and thus even when present, the idea or memory of the guru becomes a spiritual and psychological touchstone for a history of belonging to a supportive religious community. As such, images of multiple gurus and other inspirational teachers are added to the *mūrtis* on communal altars. The devotional status of each guru may persist for such attendees, but regardless of any shared subcultural or personal religious affiliations, knowledge, ethical behaviour and emotional support are still disseminated through each wider post-lineage community on a peer-to-peer basis.

In Britain at least, this more democratic and extra-lineage activity undertaken by devotional subgroups at the camps, such as the devotees of Babaji and Amma mentioned in the previous chapter, may be specific to those Hindu devotional groups whose members are mostly white rather than diasporic, although the work of Maya Warrier demonstrates that such groups are also favoured by the Indian middle classes (Warrier 2003: 214). The syncretism and democratisation of knowledge inherent to post-lineage yoga partially guards against many universalised narratives, including ethnic and religious nationalism, and absolute faith in a guru. But issues of race and ethnicity are not absent from this or any (sub)culture. Religious expression is both constrained by, and constrains, all “terrestrial, corporeal, and cosmic” transformations from one cultural reality to another (Tweed 2006: 75). In contrast, speaking of her own Indian heritage, Trishula told me:

“The irony is that I came back to it through westerners, through people whose lineage it wasn't because maybe they had fresh eyes, they had an innocence, they had a new love for it.” – Trishula, Beltane Bhakti Gathering

## The importance of non-transactional service and subcultural notions of ‘radicalism’

Those attendees who are uncomfortable with *bhakti* practices at these camps still engage in communal religious practices, through the shared work practices known as *karmayoga* or *sevā*. *Sevā* is perhaps the most important and universal moral value of this post-lineage subculture, demonstrated by the high value assigned to the performance of various acts of communal

service. Originally, *sevā* narrowly denoted the practice of service to deity, guru and devotees, but

in its modern sense of organised service to humanity, [it] has become a marked feature of an increasing number of recent and contemporary Hindu movements since the mid-19th century (Beckerlegge 2015: 39),

and “*sevā* is a highly portable religious practice” (Beckerlegge 2015: 53). In this subculture, it is a way to perform community values of service and humility at the camps themselves, and enact them upon the wider community, in charitable works and community service. As Trishula’s husband says during a ritual to celebrate the many paths of yoga at Colourfest:

“It’s the easiest form of yoga. Everybody can do it. Not much excuse to not be able to serve, really. [...] Don’t wait to be asked. Yeah, it’s a very, very fast way to purify your mind and your heart.”

*Sevā* fulfils a number of connected functions to support the community and its values, in ways that appear to be significantly different to the politically astute, organised social programmes associated with large Indian lineages (Beckerlegge 2015: 210) and the self-promotional, competitive charity drives of brand-based organisations (Koch 2015: 73). Even for Colourfest, with its larger financial turnover, the payment in kind represented by *sevā*, undertaken by organisers as well as teachers and crew, is a significant contributor to their financial and community stability. Such shared work reinforces community solidarity (Wenger 1999: 78). But it also overtly encourages the do-it-yourself aspect of temporarily autonomous spaces, and thus aligns these events with countercultural values such as personal accountability, ecological frugality, and communal inter-dependence. At Santosa, having to commit to *sevā* in advance is even discussed as a useful screening process for attendees that do not share the community’s norms.

As Trishula says of her own event, the Beltane Bhakti Gathering:

“Any profit it goes to something meaningful because that feels not only good for me but I think everyone that’s coming feels like they’re not just having a good time for their own self but it has a kind of wider ripple.”

Trishula makes a deliberate axiological connection between service and spiritual development that is a rejection of hedonistic self-interest. As she put it: “Ram Das puts it beautifully he says ‘It’s about being free not being high and there is a difference.’” There are many within post-lineage yoga who, as she does, claim indifference to the very modest financial rewards involved. Their stated aim for gathering together at these events is community and devotion



rather than competition, or even teaching. These are events with often precarious financial situations, where the organisers' reward is not quantifiable as a growth in income or commercial visibility. The mechanisms of financial exchange and brand coherence involved in running these events are a symptom of their socio-political embeddedness within neoliberal capitalism, but do not negate their attempt to resist it.

The significant role played by *bhakti* and *sevā* in this subculture suggests that what fuels and influences each practitioner, community and subculture of post-lineage yoga, is far more than professional opportunity, or simple health and wellbeing. Personal and shared landscapes of land, gods and gurus, as well as alternative networks of value and exchange, become apparent when we look deeper than the immediate socio-political context to consider the motives and agency of those involved (Kraft 2002: 172). And far from operating according to the values of the casual consumer (Urban 2000: 296), the alternative exchange mechanisms in play here are carefully evolved and mutually negotiated.

Within the research, some respondents have used the term radical to describe this subculture. As Uma says when discussing the Santosa camp: "I love the word radical, because it's about, right down deep at the roots of people's lives and ways of living, something is being nourished". But part of the radical difference of post-lineage subcultures from the perceived traditions of yoga involves more horizontal status structures. And therefore, because radical and conventional are terms defined qualitatively and relationally, some participants instead find using such terms divisive, preferring to self-define their distinctness in less elitist terms:

"So, I don't feel that we're radical, we're not trying to push up against anyone, we're not trying to prove something to someone. [...] We're not pushing, we're not providing it as 'We know the way in, you're all lost if you're doing that and we know the way in, come and join this'." – Rowan, Colourfest

And yet post-lineage practice, at least for this subculture, takes place in some very unconventional spaces. Many of my respondents felt more comfortable with travellers and refugees than with what they called the "capitalist yoga scene". Here and elsewhere, the crossover between activist and yoga communities, in membership and in behavioural norms, seems to be increasing.



One Spirit Ashram Kitchen, Calais (Blaecke 2016)<sup>3</sup>

In 2015, at the end of one event, two newly qualified One Spirit interfaith ministers were having a conversation about ministry:

“And there's a standard ministry with a capital M. Somebody doing funerals and weddings and baby naming, [and] [...] I said, 'Well, the Santosa kitchen's coming down today. We could take it to Calais and just do the kitchen.'” – Ian

At the peak of an ongoing European migrant crisis, in 2015 the ‘Calais Jungle’ emerged as one of a number of unsanctioned refugee camps along the Northern French coast (Mould 2017: 3). Forceful policing by authorities and a lawless reputation meant few NGOs had any presence in such camps, but ad-hoc and independent activist groups were involved in various charitable endeavours there. The One Spirit Ashram Kitchen was one of them. Inspired by a religious instruction to serve, using the equipment from yoga community events, they used the knowledge of how to feed thousands for very little gathered in yoga event communal kitchens and Sikh *gurdwaras*. Many of the volunteers that joined them were marginalised New Age travellers who had settled in Southern Europe. Others from within the post-lineage subculture had their lives changed as a result of volunteering there, setting up yoga programs to support vulnerable refugee populations in their home towns. For some post-lineage yoga teachers, a first urge to help was born watching helpless as migrants washed ashore in front of European retreat centres.

But many contemporary yoga teachers are aware of the ongoing refugee crisis without being moved to get involved. And whilst an established yoga practice is not a prerequisite for thriving in such anarchic environments, the ethical habits of the post-lineage counterculture did combine with long histories of mindful embodiment to support some:

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<sup>3</sup> All photos not of the camps are public documents and include full citations

“And whether that gives you on the inside some inner strength to drop the importance of possessions, or [...] to take the risks. To take the gambles.” - Ian

For Ian, what bound them together: organisers, volunteers, and refugees, practitioners and non-practitioners, post-lineage or not, is a shared experience of strength found in marginalisation:

“It's people living outside of the system. Or people pushing the barriers and having the imagination and the strength to think it doesn't have to be like this, it could be like this.”

## A unique subculture evolving through common processes

Post-lineage yoga may be practised in many more places and ways than we might yet know. But here it is both enabled by, and creative of, the distinct subculture of its summer camps. At its heart stand key individuals, whose practices and inter-relationships this thesis will turn to next.

My literature review demonstrated a heritage of countercultural engagements with what is often called modern postural yoga, whilst this chapter shows how that heritage is evident in the histories of attendees, organisers and events of this post-lineage subculture. These events are where the mainstream meets one edge of a surviving countercultural community, and where borrowed privilege meets social justice in the common dream of a hedonistic festival reimagined.

As a result of that heritage, at the heart of the subculture, simple service and a valorisation of natural rhythms combine to nourish a community of teachers from many lineages and none. The practices they freely share show evidence of a diverse palimpsest of sources, and oscillate between intentional transformation and nourishing self-acceptance. These practices are taught in spaces that are porous to their ecology and osmotic to each other, as music, instruction, lineage and even community soften their borders to meet each other. These spaces also induce experiences of the sacred, calling the holy names of its participants and engaging in henotheistic, multi-denominational, but overtly religious rituals. Such processes are fundamental to supporting this specific subculture, but it is very possible that similar processes may be found wherever a post-lineage subculture is able to thrive.

In each post-lineage yoga subculture, the intricate web of inter- and intrapersonal connections with more than human selves and human and other than human relations is also marked by long histories, impersonal forces, divine influence and seductive pollutions. It is formed on and

nourished by the land, shaped by history, animated by *prāṇa* (life force). Whilst much of contemporary transnational yoga practice may indeed be confined to a physical practice and its physical benefits, within this post-lineage subculture at least, it is assumed that one's practice of yoga also includes ethical, interpersonal, ecological and, to a lesser extent, political engagement.

The yoga practice found here is diverse, but it centres on the common subcultural perception that neoliberal lifestyles have a polluting effect, which encounters with yoga practices and the natural environment can purify. This is evident not just in the preference for muddy feet on a mat, but also in ambivalence to commonly used smart phones and a suspicion of vaccines and contrails. Given yoga's eternal concern with health and wellbeing, it is unsurprising that all these technologies are accused of making us sick. For many post-lineage practitioners, our very bodies are being invaded and our minds seduced by neoliberalism, and the evidence is written on the sky above them (Crockford 2017: 178).

Beyond common conventions for interpersonal conduct, the levels of engagement with radical politics or ways of living here are dependent on personal affordances, as much as they are influenced by a subculture that carries the legacy of key British countercultural moments. This legacy is renewed as with each generation, more activists become involved in self-care communities in order to sustain their activism. Radicalism and orthodoxy in the practice form, teaching and cultural politics can inter-relate in many meaningful ways. Each teacher of post-lineage yoga is located somewhere on a spectrum of innovation from the more normative and mainstream, and from those who maintain strong links to lineage, to those that reject it completely.

Over and again, in teaching beyond the authority of lineage, post-lineage practitioners here speak of the place of balance and the seat of wisdom as being with the hands, at the heart. As one of my case studies writes:

The heart-space has been seen as the gateway to trans-personal reality and real 'spiritual' identity (the post-rational divine) since ancient times (Gladwell and Wender 2014: 59).

As we shall see in the next two chapters, the emplaced diversity of this specific post-lineage subculture, as well as the processes that support its communal moments, depend also on the ongoing and long-term individual practices of its key members. It is in those practices that the relationship with the 'inner teacher' is born, and it is those practices that this thesis now turns to examine.



Images from the Colourfest website

## 6. Movement case studies

This chapter moves away from the interpersonal towards the intrapersonal aspects of post-lineage yoga. Each of the following case studies demonstrates the diversity of individual practice through its uniqueness, but also starts to uncover the common processes that underpin practice development. As I will demonstrate, through this and later chapters, every individual practice both contributes to and depends on the group norms of its specific subculture. Each of the following case studies considers further the negotiations with lineage and authority that were introduced in Chapter 5. Each were chosen as examples of the thematic currents set out in the previous chapter, and as key actors in subcultural transmission networks.

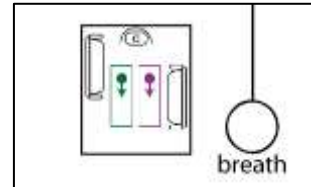
Together they demonstrate a series of productive relationships. Through the first, I show the tension between self-acceptance and the ideal self, and in the second, between resilience to the natural world, and the self as a microcosmic temple. In the third, I show the internal dance of different elemental selves, and in the fourth, the use of ritual in the creation of self-intimacy. In the fifth, I show how self-discipline can sustain the ethic of service, and in the last, how sacred ceremony can reveal the mysteries of inner landscapes. Taken as a whole, they demonstrate the productive tension within each practitioner and thus the subculture as a whole, between lineage and peer authority, single and multiple voices of identity, and between the desire for acceptance and for transformation. Their order here is chosen to most clearly enable such comparison in Chapters 7 and 8, before Chapters 9 and 10 examine in detail the relationship between individual practice, and the processes of group transmission.

My understanding of the intention and lived experience of each co-practice is grounded in each respondent's practice commentary: their own explanations during teaching at the camps, their own words in online and print media, and above all the interviews that follow the co-practices. Unless otherwise referenced, in this chapter all direct citations come from respondents in those interviews.

Each of the case studies also represents a unique moment of co-practice, in which I meet each respondent in their own practice, follow them as best I can, and then I interview them about their practice: its history, influences, and that day's manifestation. Although the modern history of yoga transmission relies on various forms of co-practice as bodies moving and sitting together, rarely is the individual practice of a practitioner given such undivided attention by a witness. Therefore, not only is this data unique within yoga scholarship, the method itself was

productive of insights into the nature of co-practice and mimesis that I return to in later chapters.

## Case study 1: “the pristine body”



### 1.1 Lineage and authority

Veronika does not have a separated space for yoga, and she rarely manages an uninterrupted daily practice: the demands of family pull on her.

“I can't use my yoga as an excuse or a reason not to be present [...] and just say, 'Sorry, I can't deal with you right now.'”

For the sake of the recording her boys are settled in the adjacent room, and Veronika manages a forty-minute practice, apart from the interruption that we see in fig. 15.

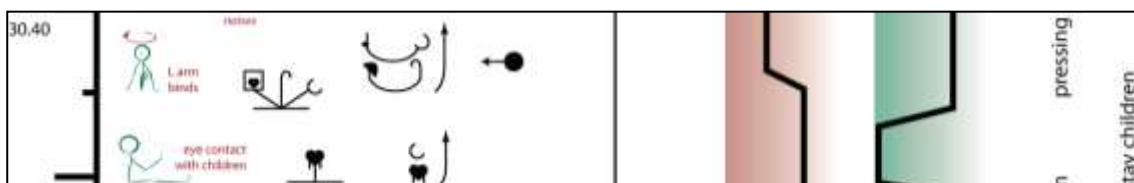


Fig. 15a. Case study 1: Settling the family

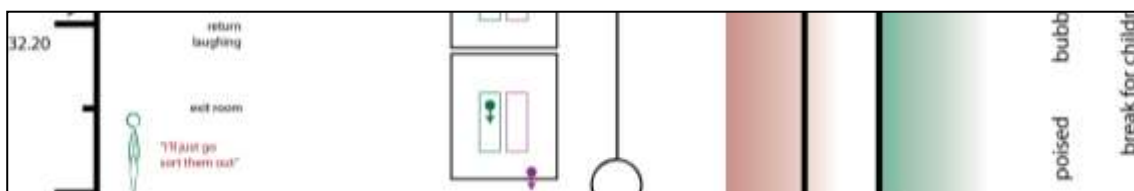


Fig. 15b. Case study 1: Settling the family

Like all of my respondents, the practice reflects Veronika’s long history of multiple yoga and meditation influences. Our co-practice begins and ends with silent Vipassana meditation in the form of a breath awareness technique known as Anapana. Early in the practice, when Veronika has been consistently aware of the breath “for a minute or so without interruption”, she

moves on to the systematic observation of the body shown in fig. 16. Consistent awareness of the somatic experience of the body gives way to practising equanimity to the sensations thus experienced. In this co-practice, we can see that this initial process takes around seven minutes in total.

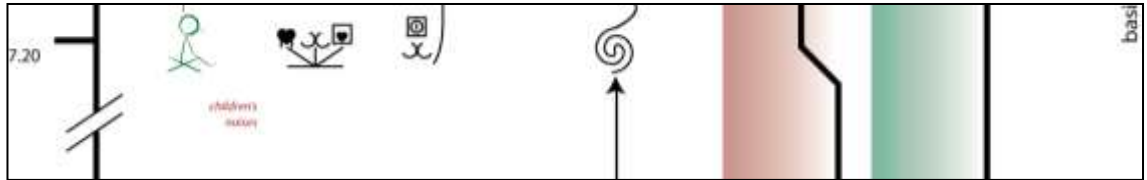


Fig. 16a. Case study 1: Practicing equanimity



Fig. 16b. Case study 1: Practicing equanimity

Movement, when it comes, is steady, with few increases in intensity outside of periodic flowing sequences to keep us warm. Veronika works from a well-established personal repertoire, including only what she already knows works for her. This includes the common adaptation from traditional Ashtanga Yoga *vināsa* (movement refrain) mentioned in Lutz (2015). We can see her in fig. 17, stepping forwards to kneeling rather than jumping through to sitting.

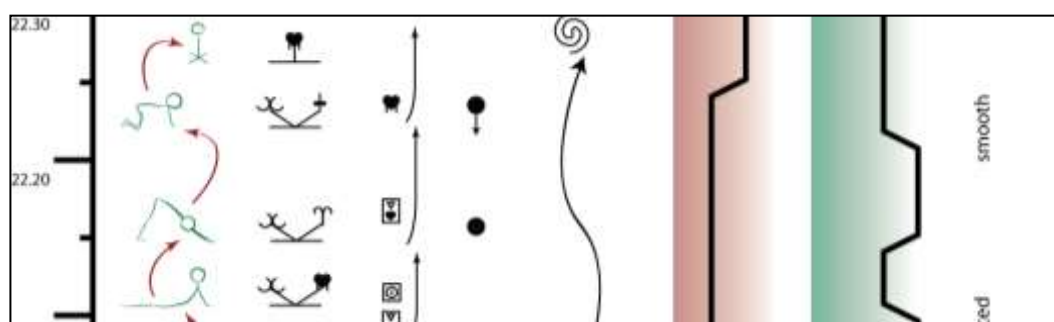


Fig. 17a. Case study 1: Adapting Ashtanga Yoga





Fig. 17b. Case study 1: Adapting Ashtanga Yoga

A number of movements during the co-practice are concerned with increasing bodily sensation, such as opening and closing the palms, as seen in fig. 18. In this way, as she puts it “you're actually constantly aware of the body in all its subtleties and all its gross sensations.”



Fig. 18a. Case study 1: Increasing sensation



Fig 18b. Case study 1: Increasing sensation

These Vipassana and Kashmir Yoga techniques refine and intensify Veronika’s somatic awareness so that the immediate needs of the body can be diagnosed internally. These are subsequently treated during the co-practice with movements from Reflex Yoga that she helped to develop, and sequences extracted from the set Ashtanga Yoga practice. Veronika contrasts this responsive somatic awareness strongly with those less-experienced practitioners whose practice is automatic rather than reflexive.

“You can tell by how they move. Yeah? If they move too fast, or too rhythmically. Not even rhythmically. It's more habitually.”

As a result of those years taken to build a personal repertoire, whether the use of the pre-set Ashtanga hip series seen in fig. 19 is universally effective or a psycho-somatic effect entrained in the course of Veronika's practice is unclear.

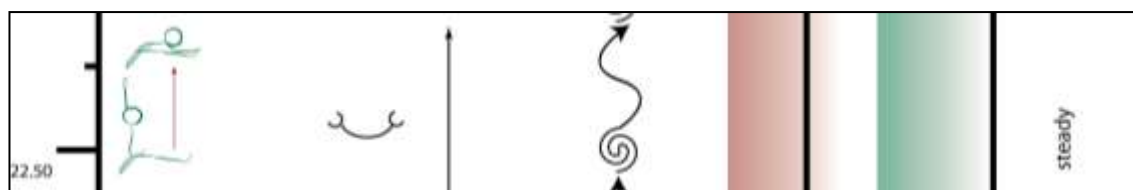


Fig. 19a. Case study 1: Established remedies

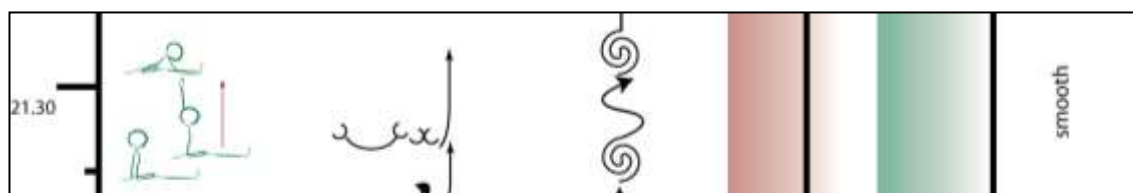


Fig. 19b. Case study 1: Established remedies

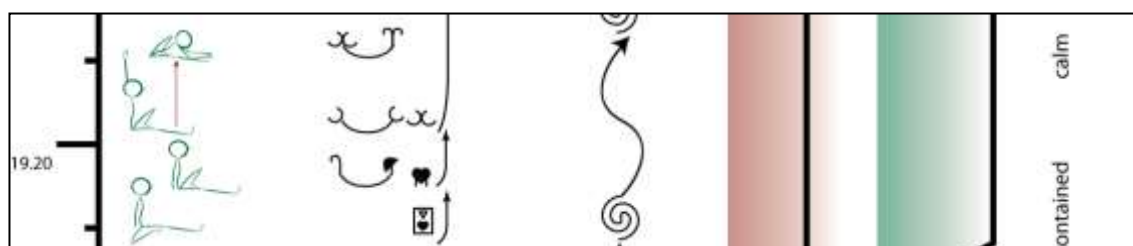


Fig. 19c. Case study 1: Established remedies

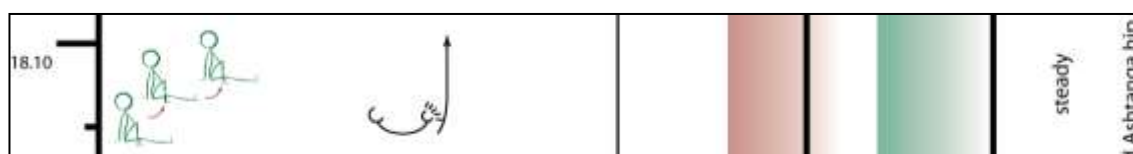


Fig. 19d. Case study 1: Established remedies



Fig. 19e. Case study 1: Established remedies

## 1.2 Intentions and outcomes

For Veronika's personal neurophysiology, a free, easeful breath is the aim and result of the practice. Her chest often "feels like a cage, [...] holding inside", preventing her from taking the breath that feels best for her. In an early forward bend, in fig. 20 she holds her head and checks the specific position of a particular vertebra that she feels 'dropping' if her breath is unencumbered. Elsewhere in the practice, frequent pauses allow her to match her experience against this primary objective of a free breath.

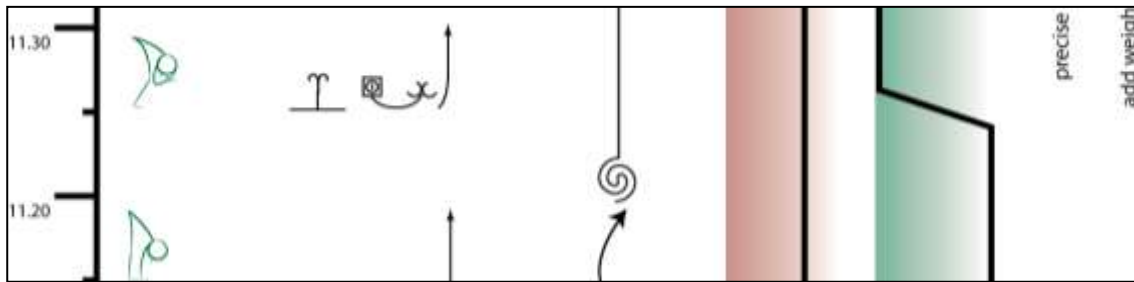


Fig. 20a. Case study 1: 'Dropping' a vertebra



Fig. 20b. Case study 1: 'Dropping' a vertebra

Twists and other cross-body movements in fig. 21 combine with a heightened awareness of the hands and breathing with the aim of awakening and clearing the relevant 'Moro' infant reflex pattern and lessening its recurrence.



Fig. 21a. Case study 1: Clearing the 'Moro' reflex

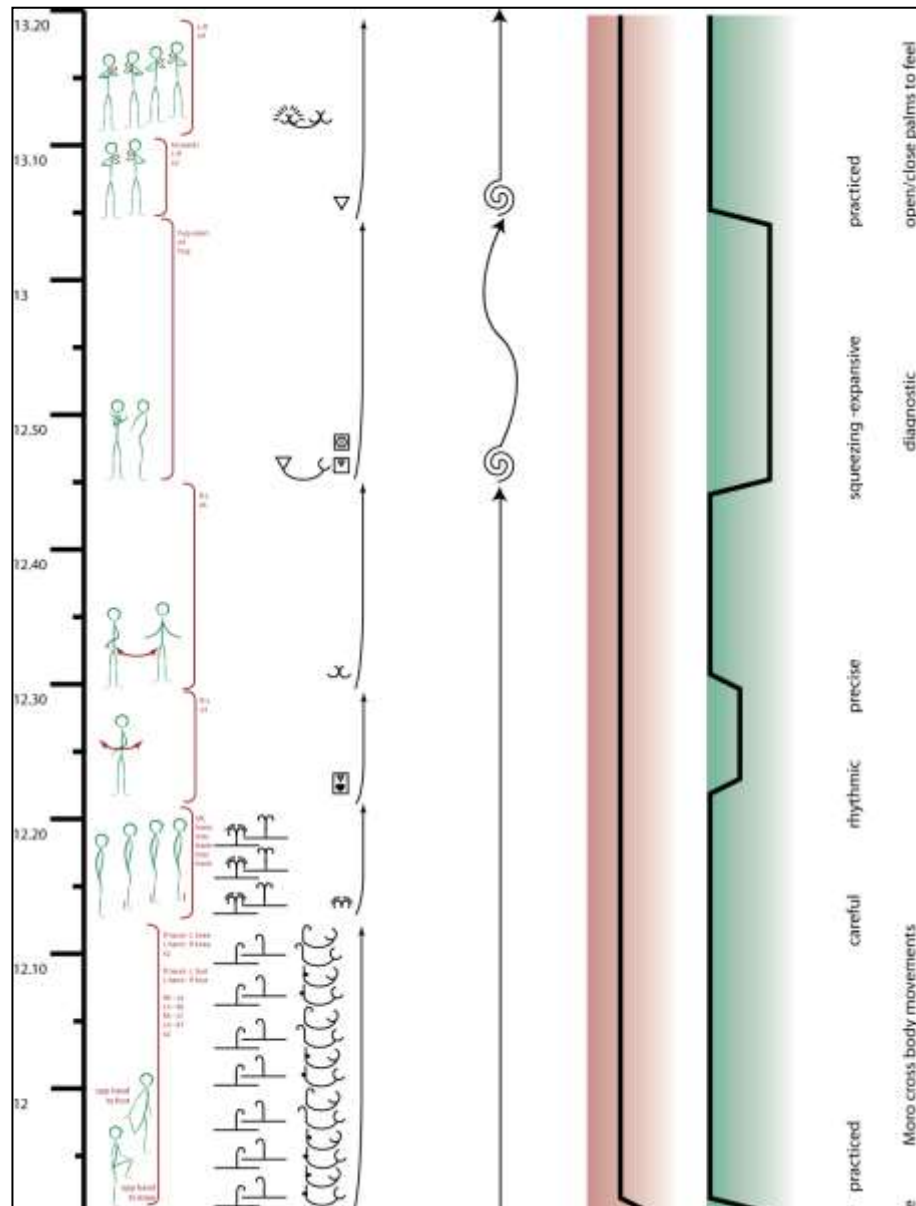


Fig. 21b. Case study 1: Clearing the 'Moro' reflex

The same pattern of movement and internal awareness is rehearsed in visualisation whilst performing more common *āsanas*. And Veronika knows that one particular bound twist, seen in fig. 22, gives her a better release of the breath than any other.



Fig. 22a. Case study 1: The peak twist

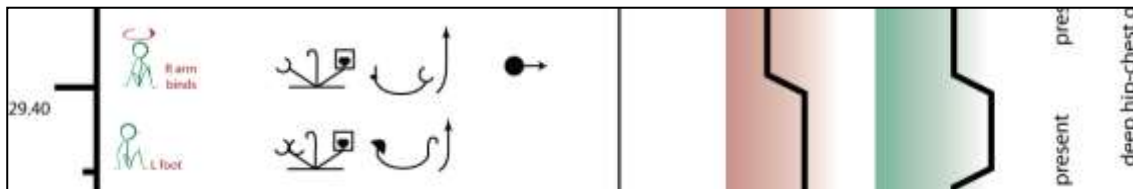


Fig. 22b. Case study 1: The peak twist

After the peak twist has reset her breathing, she can explore taking that sense of ease into both movement and stillness.

“And it’s releasing even more, so I’m getting much, much deeper into that release, into that sense of teaching the body: you can be like this. [...] There’s part of my neurology that knows that, yeah?”

Veronika’s practice balances between the equanimity of Vipassana, and the self-regulating protocols of her Reflex Yoga. It aims for sustainable maintenance rather than radical transformation. Incremental improvements bring novel experiences that feel familiar. She talks of evolving towards a bodily blueprint, before a history of common traumas set a less comfortable pattern in the body. This blueprint is both that of a familiar, younger body, and a more abstract ideal body requiring faith in its possible existence.

Her yoga practice allows her to intensify a somatic memory of feeling “emotionally as well as physically open”, and as a result, moving more effectively in the world. As Vipassana resets her psychological processes, *āsana* resets her neurophysiology. As she understands it, we cannot control the events of our lives, but we can train for the most skilful responses. “Somewhere deep in there is [...] that deep knowledge, of that pristine body that you originally were.”

For Veronika, evolving impermanence “from breath to breath” is the only constant beyond that pristine blueprint. Although she has had ecstatic experiences in yoga, she finds the concept of deity as implausible as a “fairy tale”. For Veronika, humanity’s unique gift is the capacity for self-awareness that makes conscious self-evolution possible. This transformation is the goal, but not the daily focus of her practice, which is in all forms a “deliberate, determined act” to be present in equanimity. But the result can still be joyous, as seen in fig. 23 (over page).

“[It] doesn’t teach you to be different. It teaches you to appreciate and have a love of all things, no matter what they are.”

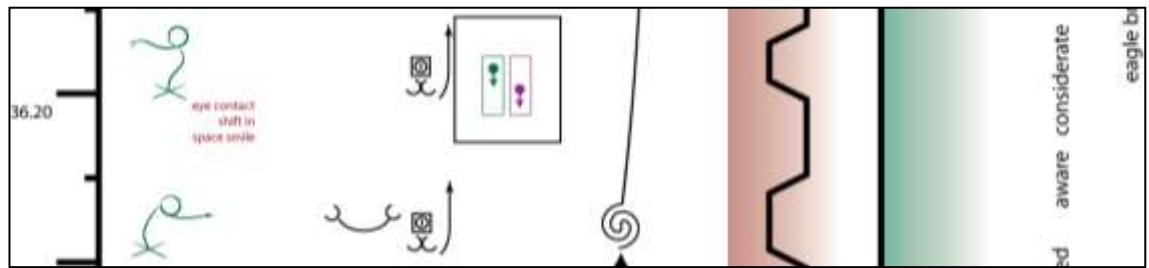


Fig. 23a. Case study 1. Enjoying a free breath



Fig. 23b. Case study 1. Enjoying a free breath

## Case study 2: the “microbial temple”



### 2.1 Lineage and authority

Outside Christopher’s suburban Bristol garden, the practice ecology includes rain, and the noise of traffic and construction. I am aware that Christopher has recently been in a traffic accident. We also discuss the effects of a microlight crash and the broken wrist he sustained coming off a bike eight weeks before. For Christopher, each of those impacts marks the porous body with the force of the world traveling to meet it. But responding effectively to injury for him is one route to increased resilience, as an opportunity for improved self-awareness.

“Movement is like medicine, if you understand what you’re doing [...]. We’re pretty much a self-healing mechanism. Constantly seeking homeostasis and balance.”

Yet a number of his early encounters with the universalised remedies of established yoga lineages left him with more physical issues rather than less. Christopher considers inept or

inappropriate teaching to be a result of incomplete understanding of how life evolves and moves. The key to the practice, then, is listening to one's specific needs, as we learn to respond to the many stresses that come upon us as individuals, uniquely evolving in a robust world.

The practice he shares as a result is a contradiction of striving and gentleness. Cautious with his recent injuries, Christopher judges this day's *āsana* choices as accordingly exploratory and gentle, but by any other measure, this is a strong practice. Every section of practice is linked by the standard Ashtanga *vinyāsa* seen in fig. 24, with the addition of a pulsing bounce in *caturaṅga daṇḍāsana* (a low press up transitional position). Squats too are held with a pulsing bounce, working the muscles of shoulder and hip respectively. It is a practice that would be inaccessible to many practitioners, and unsustainable for others.

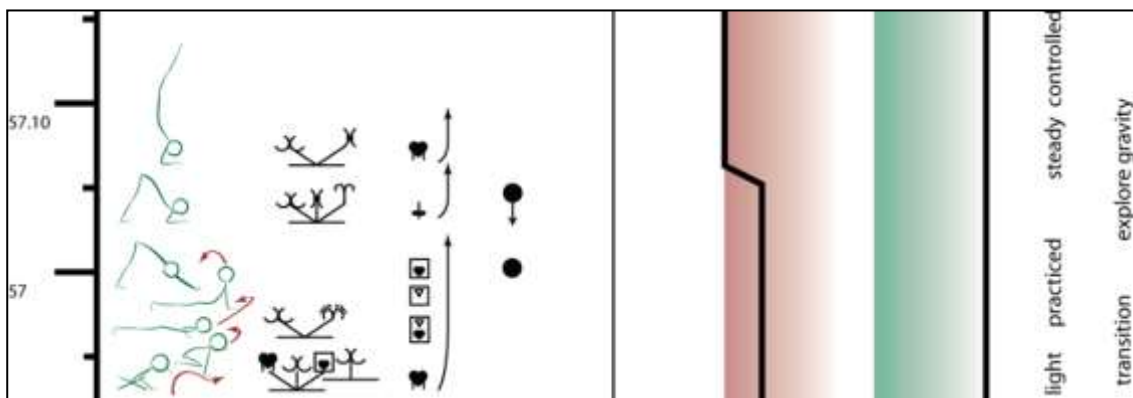


Fig. 24a. Case study 2: Adding a pulsing bounce



Fig. 24b. Case study 2: Adding a pulsing bounce

For Christopher, being sufficient to the needs of the world is enabled by a sustained practice of training and testing. The practice is precise, muscular, and functional, but so also esoteric, as seen in its quality of movement and intention. Even the stillness of meditation as demonstrated in fig. 25 (over page) is a sprung tension of potential action in the world that



gives the whole a sense of contained intensity. And yet Christopher's own experience of it is calm, gentle, even blissful.

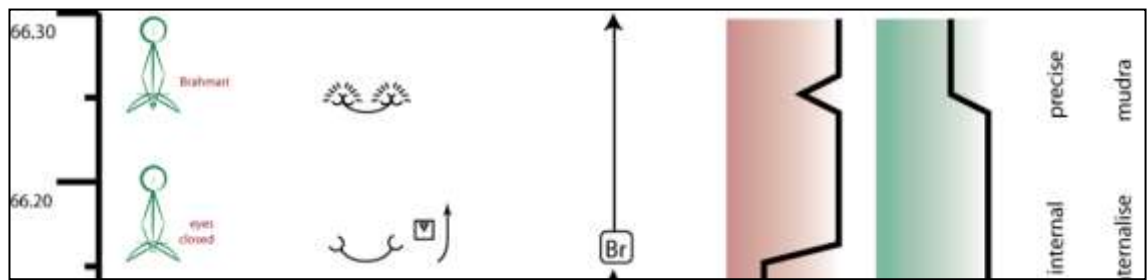


Fig. 25a. Case study 2: The sprung tension of potential action



Fig. 25b. Case study 2: The sprung tension of potential action

From an initial attunement to the world, through each bowing reconnection to the earth and shift in gravity, in every testing exploration of balance, strength and mobility, his presence is as complete and sustained as the common and audible breath pattern that carries the practice known as *ujjāyī*. And if that practice may at times seem unforgiving, the quality of presence is one of care and intimacy. Whether this is effortless strength, or an internalisation of effort as normal, is ultimately unknowable to the researcher. Within historical and yoga debates extreme, even supernatural powers are given as either an aim or side effect of practice (see Singleton and Mallinson 2017). In contemporary yoga culture such *siddhis* are often considered to be less important parts of historical source texts with uncertain ontological status (Wujastyk 2017). At the same time a hint of supernatural ability suggests a supernaturally dedicated practitioner. The charisma of many contemporary yoga teachers is to a large part based in the desirability of abilities such as hypermobility or acrobatic balancing that are almost supernatural and yet presented as mundane, and this is no different in the post-lineage camp subculture. Consciously or not, this is part of what Christopher is performing here, and a subject I will return to.

According to Christopher, his practice restores function, increases understanding and resilience, and reclaims the union of self and world. His interpretation of ecological and socio-



political disconnection is well practised. Missing from Christopher's narrative are the ways in which the limitations to personal power and possibility can persist beyond revealing the forces that create them. Although sequences of *āsanas* arise for him according to prior "systems and preparation" and others relate to internal, energetic work, the shapes of Christopher's *āsana* and the refrain of *vinyāsa* are familiar from the Ashtanga practice repertoire, and its influence on modern postural yoga forms, as seen in practice guides such as Brown (2009). Even outside, his practice is largely linear, contained within the edges of the yoga mat he has left behind. Christopher is dismissive of what he calls the "Hindu aerobics" led by teachers who are: "just doing what they've been told." But his own practice still shows its roots in what Alter has called 'muscular Hinduism', referring to post-colonial Hindu theological associations "between muscles, morals and self discipline" (Alter 2006: 763) which greatly influenced the early modern development of yoga in India.

There are clear exceptions. There are functional engagements of the hips in squats, and the posterior muscle groups in active back bends. Fluid movement softens the edges of down dog and other variations familiar from the subculture's more 'feminine' practices. The graceful sideways lunge series in fig. 26 evokes a history with Chinese *qigong*.

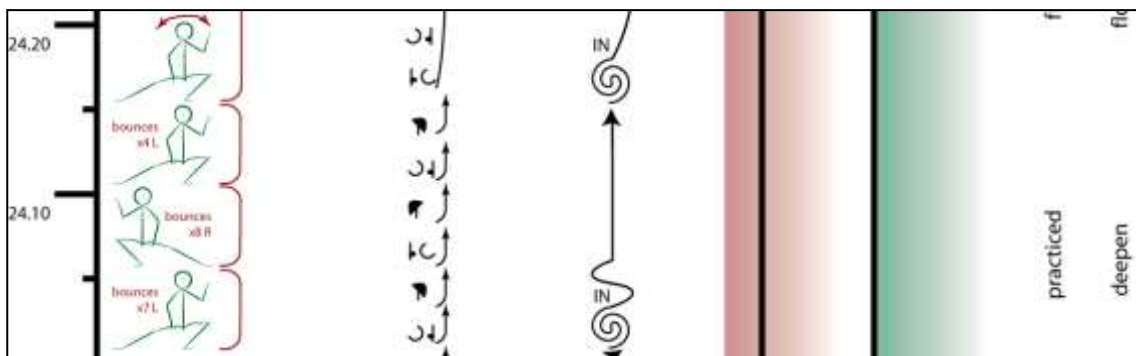


Fig. 26a. Case study 2: More fluid movement



Fig. 26b. Case study 2: More fluid movement

The influence of such “functional movement”, the practices labelled feminine, such as the rolling cat-cow pose below, and also martial arts are common within these practice networks, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter. Christopher’s unrelenting commitment to understanding the lived human condition, and his intimacy with the natural world, are profoundly important to him. This practice of deep somatic listening, is endless and evolving. Decades of experience have not dulled his drive to test the edges of the possible, to meet the world ever injured, ever healing, each and every day. As with Veronika, the practice incrementally evolves beyond lineage, keeping pace with the evolution of awareness.

“It’s the movement in us for evolution and for change and for growth and for greater consciousness. It’s something that just lives through us.”

Christopher’s focus is not on performance, however, but exploration of the moment to moment of lived, somatic experience. For him, each movement in the practice seeks an ever-shifting edge of possibility in action, within the arising boundary between internal and external world. For Christopher, this boundary exploration is both the heart of the practice, and yet the boundary itself is an illusion. As his own book describes it, much of the practice explores alignment to gravity, and strives to meet its force, as an expression of one’s relationship to the ground of existence (Gladwell and Wender 2014). As a teacher, he sees much of his work as correcting a habit of “over-extended” movement that is embedded in mainstream yoga teaching, “because that flow of tonnes of atmosphere through your body into the earth has to be channelled effectively”.

The practice is also marked by frequent holds and gestures of binding the limbs around the body that explore, reinforce and then release more consciously drawn and evolving edges with the world, in the twists and folds seen in fig. 27.

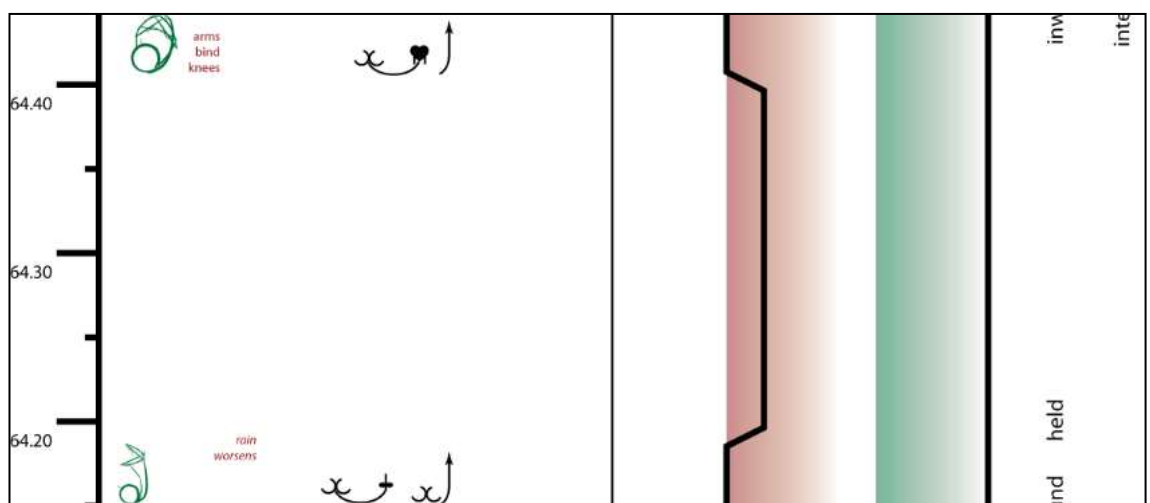


Fig. 27a. Case study 2: Holding and binding



Fig. 27b. Case study 2: Holding and binding

This combination of intensity of effort, gentle presence, and explorations of gravity and edge are most evident in bound and held balances: the lotus variations of peacock and shoulderstand poses that come near the start and end of the practice. Before and after sit most of the less *āsana*-focused practices of breath, *bandha* (various body ‘locks’ or holding patterns) and meditation. Between them Christopher’s dance with impact and strain, ease and connection, balances as if on a slackline, like the lotus peacock pose shown in fig. 28.

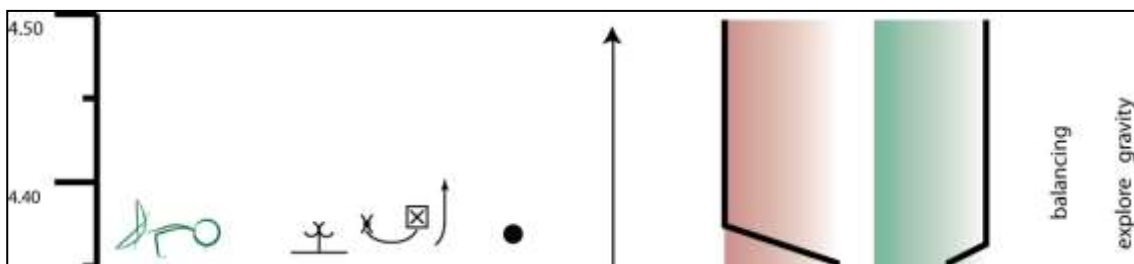


Fig. 28a. Case study 2: Balancing ease and strain

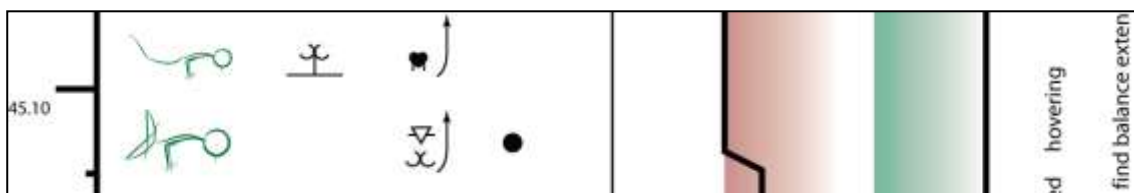


Fig. 28b. Case study 2: Balancing ease and strain



Fig. 28c. Case study 2: Balancing ease and strain

## 2.2 Intentions and outcomes

Throughout the practice, Christopher is navigating trance states through pulsing movements, breath work, esoteric flows of energy and repeating *bīja mantras* ('seed' or single syllable chants). Christopher considers how to share these significant aspects without breaking his experiential flow. In the event, he trusts to the intimacy of mimesis and **entrainment**: the unconscious synchronisation between bodies. He speaks only to clarify two points of alignment, and share a momentary discovery in handstand, as seen in fig. 29. As he said to me afterwards: "I could feel you feeling in. I could feel that relationship in fact as well."

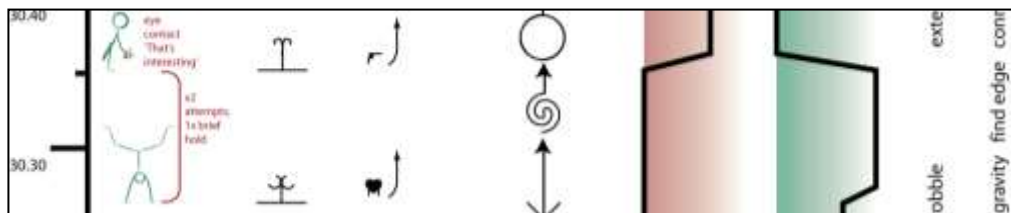


Fig. 29a. Case study 2: Sharing a discovery



Fig. 29b. Case study 2: Sharing a discovery

For Christopher, despite our resilient boundaries with a testing world, life is a presence that flows through all of us as sensation and receptivity. We are each a living temple temporarily holding space within the world for millions of sympathetic organisms.

"Most of the microbes that we host or that hold us together are really, really sweet ones. [...] If we feed them with the right stuff, they show us lots of love."

Thus, all practice is devotional to life itself, in a deliberate remembrance of porousness to the world. This remembrance is

"something that we need to practise daily because it's very easy to get lost in the unconsciousness of it all. In the nihilistic separate materialism."

The illusion of separation is what he believes gives rise to the fortresses of rigid, artificial boundaries on the level of the corporation, religious institution or nation state just as much as within the individual person. Just as the canvas structures of camp life enable a porousness of

human to other than human presence, so at home in his garden, he is able, as in fig. 30, to bring his

“own forehead the earth, to this holy, holy earth and [...] feeling the grass and the smell of the earth.”



Fig. 30. Case study 2: Bringing the forehead to the holy earth

Bound and yet finding freedom, as seen in fig. 31 he finds gratitude inevitable, reclaimed from the forces of ignorance and apathy, corporate “beta-wave brain states” and other primitive, “post-feudal nonsense”. As part of that porous unity of self-in-the-world, the presence of the researcher also affects the practice:

“The vortexes of peace and clarity that were there, it was just beautiful. [...] And I'm grateful because actually I think it was courtesy of this as well. [...] It's a really beautiful process. Thank you.”



Fig. 31a. Case study 2: “Vortexes of peace and clarity”



Fig. 31b. Case study 2: “Vortexes of peace and clarity”

## Case study 3: the dance of “Śiva and Śakti”



### 3.1 Lineage and authority

On her way back from Ireland, where she has been planning a course on female sexuality and creativity, Uma asks if we can bring forward our session, and the next morning I meet her in her converted garage studio in Stroud. The co-practice she shares is organic and expansive at nearly 2 hours long. It begins and ends in deep stillness.

Uma’s practice dances with earth and air, fire and water: experiential categories of movement that she also associates with the masculine (fire) and feminine (water). As explained in the previous chapter, yoga for women’s bodies is often explained within post-lineage culture as a more nourishing practice. For Uma it is also responsive to the changing body and its ecology, and relies on an internal compass of authority.

Here these two nodes of masculine and feminine experience are in intimate relationship within the body of the individual practitioner, echoing and embodying the neo-Tantric divine dance of Śiva and Śakti, and also the love of Sītā and Ram in the Ramayana. Uma makes a concrete connection between the latter myth and her own marriage, in discussing the complicated history of their involvement with the Satyananda Yoga lineage, as explained in Chapter 4.

“[My husband and I] were [Satyananda’s] *mūrtis*. [...] He worshipped Sītā and Ram. [...] and even then, there was something in my little feminist defended cunt place that was like: there was something weird [happening].”

*Pavanamuktāsana* (joint mobilisation) movements are derived originally from Satyananda Yoga (for a definitive practice guide to Satyananda Yoga, see Saraswati (2013)). As seen in fig. 32 (over page), here they are given a “feminine, soft” edge, inspired by one teacher who is highly respected within the subculture, Angela Farmer. These are practices for what Uma

“always felt were vulnerable female bodies” until she “realised that everybody is vulnerable”. As Uma explains it, long term individual practice enables the self-knowledge needed for female practitioners to resist the authoritarian and universalising tendencies of masculine yoga systems. Yet Uma herself is proof that a similar depth of individual practice is also what confers charismatic authority on to all teachers, regardless of gender.



Fig. 32a. Case study 3: Adapting *pavanamuktāsana*

Uma frequently describes the relationships between male and female practitioners and yoga teachers in terms of intimacy, power and danger. Charismatic, masculine teaching includes “money and sex and bodies and intimacy”, whilst teachers such as Angela Farmer create a less “virile”, more consciously post-lineage space of re-enchantment in a form of intimacy with one’s ecology and every part of the physical self.

It is in this dance between universalising masculine authority and the feminine invitation to self-intimacy that Uma sees her practice, and post-lineage culture, evolving. An overtly feminist reworking of the practice begins when you take the practice “into the laboratory of your own self”. This process of reclaiming however holds the risk of disempowerment, when patriarchal, corrective gazes over largely female bodies are legitimised within wider yoga culture.

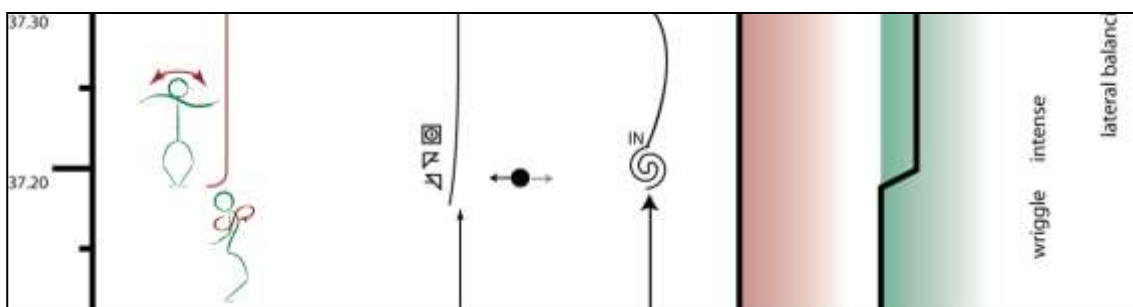


Fig. 33a. Case study 3: Exploring the visceral, female self





Fig. 33b. Case study 3: Exploring the visceral, female self

For Uma, the visceral, female self is the centre of her practice, explored through wriggling, spontaneous movements such as those in fig. 33, above. For her, this visceral female self will on occasion respond instinctively to the threat of patriarchal authority with spontaneous purification. Arriving at one ashram, Uma suddenly started:

“Unstoppable *kumjal* [an emetic purification practice] until I couldn't vomit anymore [...] and I said 'You have to take me out of this place!'.”

Other practices from patriarchal systems, such as Satyananda's Yoga Nidra and *pavanamuktāsana* might be reformed through individual practice, to serve more liberatory, inclusive aims. As she asks:

“[If] I'm tied up in knots with a belt holding me around, [...] why is that okay? [...] I've been held in a space of intimacy that's allowed for that to happen because I've taken it away and practised it.”

### 3.2 Intentions and outcomes

Uma's eyes mostly stay closed, yet like Christopher she repeatedly renegotiates boundaries: wrapping and removing blankets, and adjusting how her body meets the ground. Rocking refrains of movement flow almost always in time with a conscious breath, exploring a position in a series of waves, as in fig. 34, like a rising and falling tide. Movement is accompanied by sighs and shakes and groans.

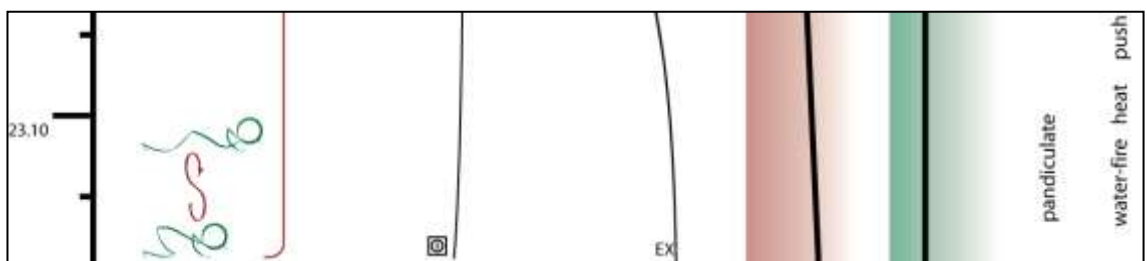


Fig. 34a. Case study 3: Moving in waves





Fig. 34b. Case study 3: Moving in waves

Uma practises in both the search for and the appreciation of what she defines as a sense of “space opening up in the body”. Each exploratory movement is repeated with micro-adjustments in joint position that test the limits of movement as if refining its target. Each ends with shaking out a body part, expelling somatic tension before returning to an evolving refrain of circling hips and elegant *mudrās* shown in fig. 35. Some of the most intense moments of the co-practice are also those of high innovation: a sensuous search for the sensation of release through effort.

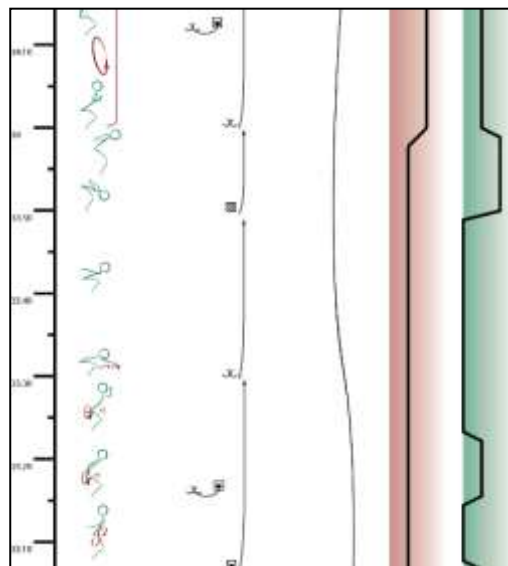


Fig. 35. Case study 3: Intensity and innovation

Within the co-practice are shapes that reflect Uma’s more conventional yoga history of Sivananda, Iyengar and Satyananda Yoga. These include supine stretches and seated hip variations like the forward bends in fig. 36 (over page). Uma also explores more precise shapes for her tendonitis, learned in recent practice with Christopher.

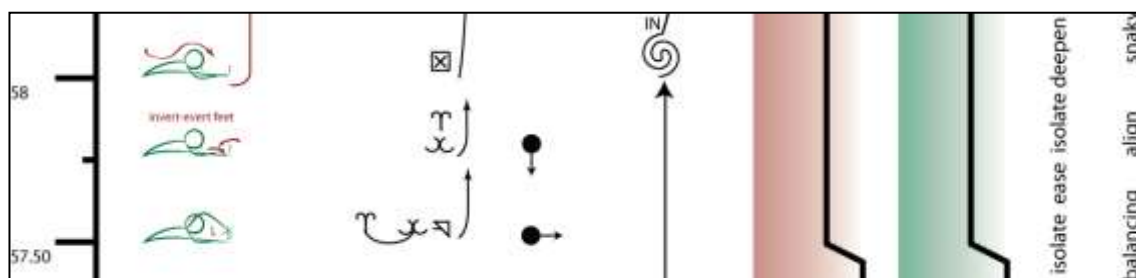


Fig. 36a. Case study 3: Addressing tendonitis



Fig. 36b. Case study 3: Addressing tendonitis

The circling refrain of hands and hips that form the core of the practice, and the heart of her own Womb Yoga style, lends an energetic, bent-elbowed, squatting, and wriggling pulsation to the rest of this co-practice, demonstrated in fig. 37.

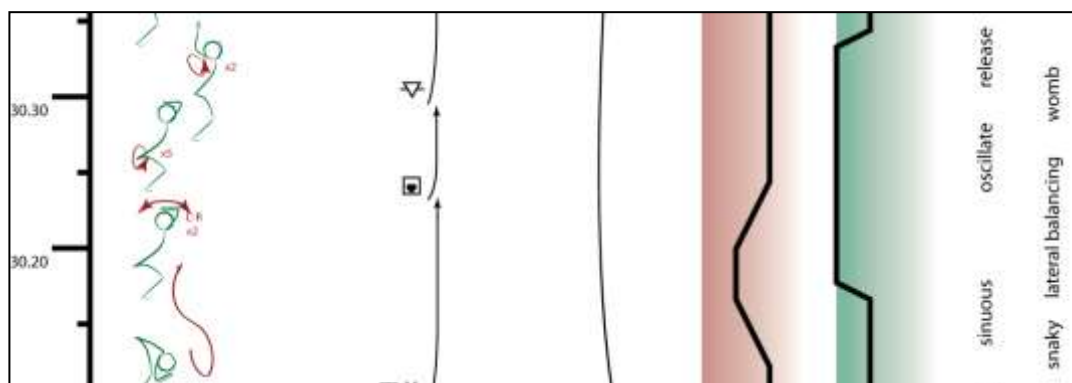


Fig. 37a. Case study 3: A circling refrain of hands and hips



Fig. 37b. Case study 3: A circling refrain of hands and hips

Uma describes the intent for the co-practice as a combination of connecting the feet to the earth, honouring the womb as she is late bleeding, and rehabilitation for chronic tendonitis on her left (dominant) side, including moments of self-massage seen in fig. 38.

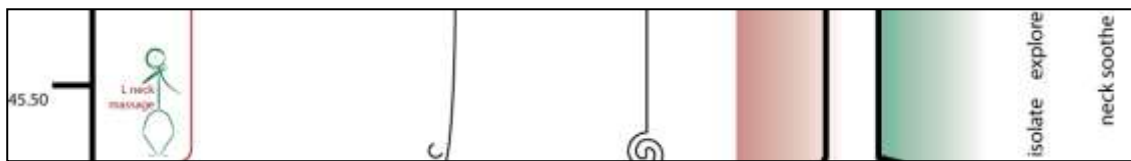


Fig. 38. Case study 3: Self-massage

Despite the somatic sensuality of the practice, when asked, Uma says her practice is about:

“maintaining a degree of flexibility, strength and mobility that helps me get on with my life without having to think about my body. [...] I want to just enjoy being in it.”

Each sensory engagement with immediate ecology is a pulsation: reaching out and drawing back in to process sensory input. Uma associates ‘thinking about the body’ with discomfort, and freedom from pain with sensual delight and a lack of rational involvement with bodily demands. She balances “what feels good” in the practice with her experiential knowledge of what feels beneficial in the long term, but her reward is immediate and joyous. “I get off on it. [...] It's like making love with yourself.”

Uma explains the co-practice as a journey through five porous elemental categories of earth, water, fire, air and aether. The *āsana* portion begins lying supine, preceded and literally grounded in a self-guided *yoganidrā* accompanied by the recorded sounds of a river in the Burren. Her connection to land and earth, remembered through the feet in standing, is transformed through water, which she explores as flowing, lubricating movements of pulsating waves in the body. Fire is invoked in more internal pumping motions that accompany the increase of intensity. Here, variations of *uḍḍīyana bandha* and *mūlabandha* like the one seen in fig. 39, draw up the diaphragms of the abdomen but are integrated into movement rather than more traditionally performed in static shapes. They are also modified to release down as well as rise up.

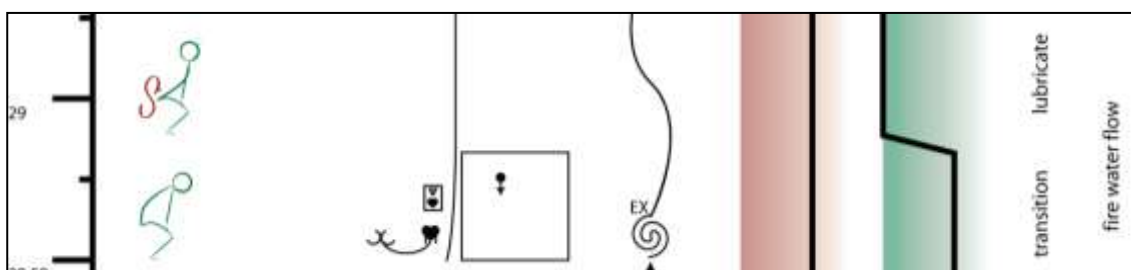


Fig. 39a. Case study 3: Adapting *bandhas*



Fig. 39b. Case study 3: Adapting *bandhas*

Uma claims to use fire to pump the energy of the earth from the feet, having made it fluid, and then expands it into airy breath, embodied in expansive arm gestures made precise by the illumination of mindfulness. The practice energetics are refined finally into aether, ending “with sound and *mantra* and silence.”

That returns the practice to stillness, and devotion. Throughout, Uma’s hands frequently come to the heart or the forehead in a universal gesture of prayer, and the practice settles with a final meditation with a Tibetan *trenwa* (*mālā* or rosary). In fig. 40, we can see she performs two silent rounds of *mantras*, followed by a seated *nyāsa*: an internal practice inscribing the devotional body from within with imagined symbols.

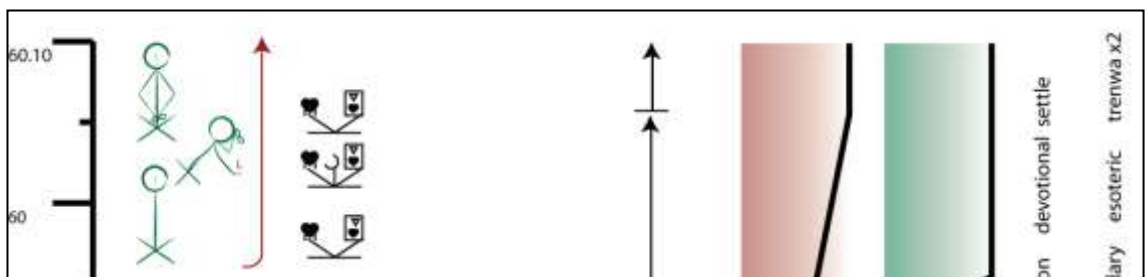


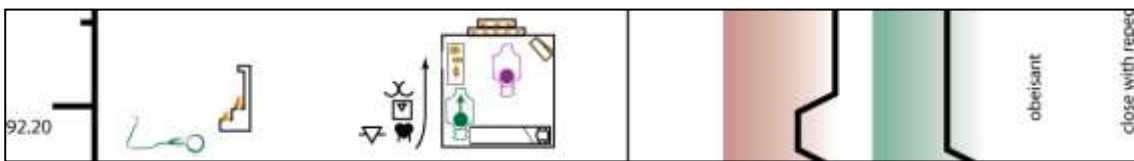
Fig. 40a. Case study 3: Returning to stillness and devotion



Fig. 40b. Case study 3: Returning to stillness and devotion

Uma links this devotion to borrowed lineage, through friends in the Tibetan Aroter and Hindu Babaji communities. Embodied in the “authentic and old” gifts of *mūrtis*, rosaries and temple bells, she talks about this part of the practice more as a link to community than guru, and land rather than deity. For her they are a collection that mixes symbols of her relationships within a gift economy, with found natural treasures.

## Case study 4: “part of you and part of nature and everything”



### 4.1 Lineage and authority

Sivani Mata’s primary practice combines Womb Yoga and Shakti Dance with a *pūjā* from the Babaji lineage. In her small bedroom in the London home she shares with her mother, we gather as she puts together her supplies, and begin a co-practice that is a spacious 90 minutes long, including her most intimate daily devotions.

Sivani Mata adapts some aspects of the set *pūjā* of her Babaji lineage in order to better reflect what she considers to be their deeper purpose. Other aspects of ritual, such as the deep *praṇam* or bow above are retained, but only after exploring their effects. Having studied and collaborated with Uma, Sivani Mata adopts a more radically feminist reclaiming of some ritual taboos. She refrains from full *pūjās* during her monthly bleed not because it is impure, but because: “I don’t need this full-on practice. I’m already making offerings. *Yoni puṣpam*. I’m offering flowers everywhere. It’s perfect!” (One term for menstruation in yogic discourse, taken from the Sanskrit, is *yonī puṣpam*, translated as ‘flowers from the source’.)



Fig. 41. Case study 4: Choosing the days perfumed oils

Her repetition of daily ritual actions therefore seems practised rather than automatic, with an economy of movement that leaves space for innovation and attentive lived experience. Each *mūrti* has their own pattern of anointing. As seen in fig. 41, above, each day a different perfumed oil and *mālā* is used.

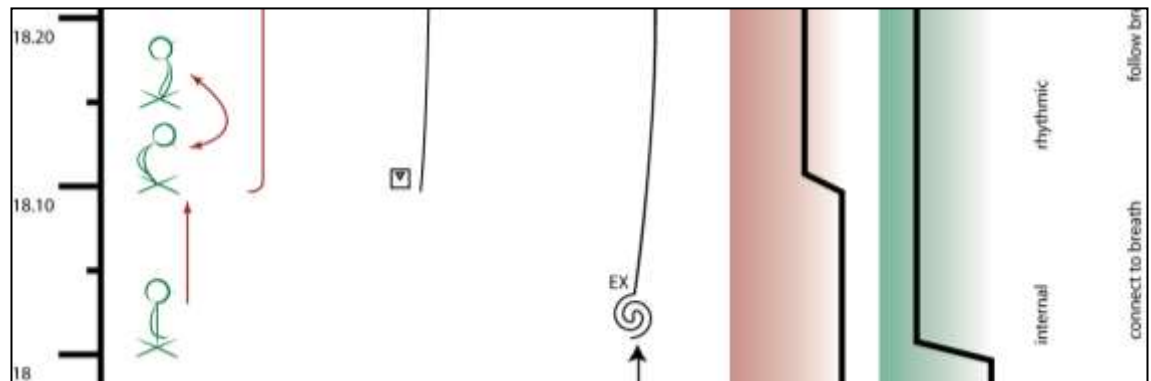


Fig. 42a. Case study 4: From breath to movement



Fig. 42b. Case study 4: From breath to movement

Movement and song are the most spontaneous sections of the practice. Movement begins, as in fig. 42, above, with a simple rocking of the spine. This follows the breath, then evolves smoothly into more expressive, pulsing *āsanas*. Each movement has a dynamic, organically emerging and consistent line. They echo many of the Womb Yoga shapes, but stay within a gentler rhythm than Uma's co-practice. Each *āsana* is performed with the skilled application of

appropriate force that can be interpreted as grace. Movement flows out of the breath as if inherent to bodily structure.

Breath is the origin point for movement, which becomes a dance of offering, which becomes song in turn, in the long and hypnotic, repeating chants that are her hallmark as a musician. Most of those songs are in Sanskrit. This is a language she reserves for connecting “with creation on a higher level”. Like the group practices discussed in the previous chapter, all of them rise steadily out of, and return to stillness, as does the *āsana* practice that flows out of and returns to the breath practice seen in fig. 43.

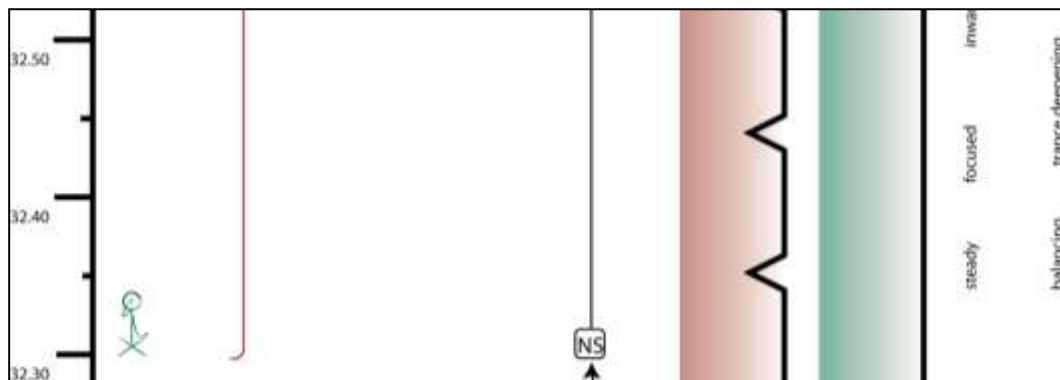


Fig. 43a. Case study 4: *Nāḍī śodhana* breathing



Fig. 43b. Case study 4: *Nāḍī śodhana* breathing

The heart of Sivani Mata’s practice is her *pūjā* to an altar of mostly, but not entirely Hindu *mūrtis*. As seen in the previous chapter, similar *pūjās* are found at all of the camps in my fieldwork, often run by ritualists from the Babaji lineage, among others. Here, however, the elaborate and repeated gestures of surrender and rituals of washing, feeding and anointing are part of individual rather than communal acts of devotion. They blend seamlessly with *āsana* and seated breath work to form Sivani Mata’s daily individual practice. The overall structure



diverges in significant aspects from the lineage form, not least in including *āsana* at all, and each day varies as to how much time is spent on each element.

“It is traditional to do *nāḍī śodhana* at that point and then just move straight into washing. So that feels like the natural pause [for movement].”



Fig. 44. Case study 4: A space filled with ritual objects

For Sivani Mata, the rhythm of washing and anointing itself is “like a very intimate moving meditation”. The ritual actions interact with the space, involving more than the usual yoga mat and cushion or sheepskin. In fact, as seen in fig. 44, above, a yoga mat would not fit in this place, crowded with ritual paraphernalia and instruments.

#### 4.2 Intentions and outcomes

Through the *pūjā* Sivani Mata expresses a fluid permeability between *mūrti*, deity and self. The animating practice that breathes ongoing life into the *mūrti*, breathes life again into a remembered perfection of the self.

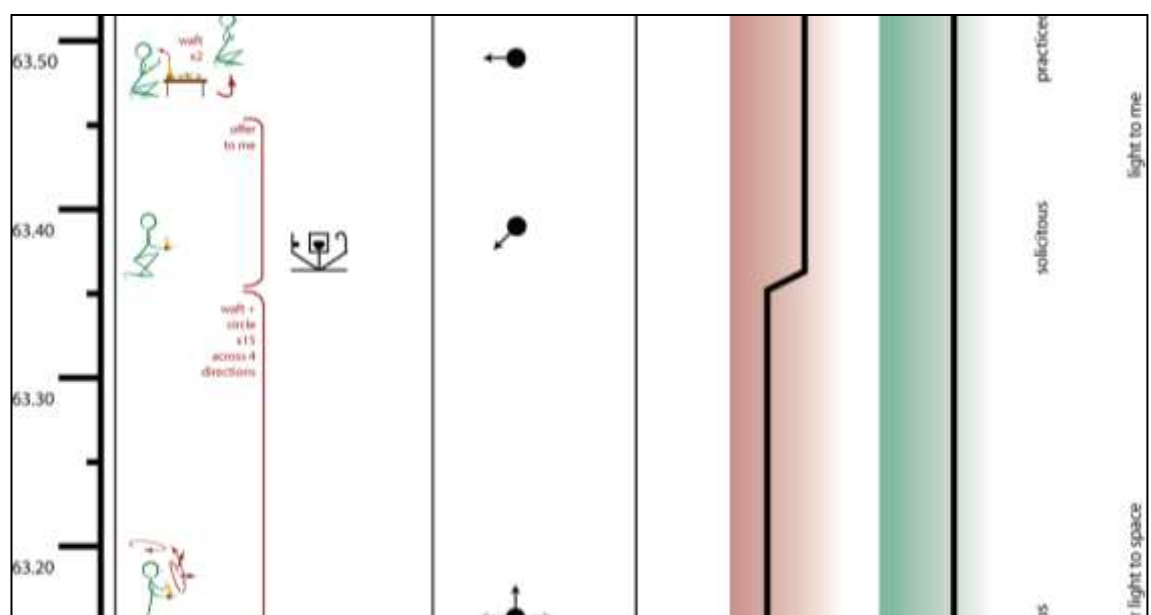


Fig. 45a. Case study 4: Cleansing *mūrtis*, self and space





Fig. 45b. Case study 4: Cleansing *mūrtis*, self and space

“Some people really feel like the *mūrti* is the being. On one level, I feel that, but [also] part of you and part of nature and everything.”

Following ritual cleansing, as seen in fig. 45, above, offerings are made to the *mūrtis* and then imbibed by the bodily self, and smoke, light and song are washed over the altar, the self and the space. These forms of multiple cleansing and multiple nourishment intensify the porousness of identity and strength of identification. All this takes place in the tiny room to which she retreats to sleep and worship, in the heart of her home. Within the room’s larger altar is an inner hearth, as seen in fig. 46, protected by a curtain behind which the chosen *mūrtis* of the day will eat. In Sivani Mata’s narrative, layers of self and other together multiply and are each intimately enclosed in a nurturing ecology that provides a sense of sanctuary. We discuss the intimacy of the practice space, which she describes as “a bit like taking a picture of my *yoni* [vulva]!”

Despite these layers of separation, this is more of an oasis than a monastic cell, a garden tumbling over the edges of its urban plot. The layers of internalisation create a deliberate space at their heart for the most delicate processes of personal healing. Within, the oasis of practice can function to reframe the mundane issues of the self through self-divinisation.

“I’m kind of trying to get out my shell a bit again. I’m in a quite deep healing process and I’ve been kind of allowing that to take over my life a bit.”



Fig. 46. Case study 4: The inner altar

The intimate and enclosed relationship between deity, *mūrti* and self, is a negotiation between the mundane and the divine in the same body. It is expressed in narratives of burying and unearthing that which seems ugly and beautiful about the self, in the surfaces and depths that form her identity. Sivani Mata has been healing from a long-held pattern of burying grief that she sees manifest as eczema on the surface of her skin.

Sivani Mata aims to train the self with nourishment rather than discipline. Both self-nourishment and offerings to deity arise from the same reclamation of abundant delight. For her, the path of *bhakti* is:

“To delight in one's true nature and [...] 'Oh, what a joy it is to be in this body and to be in this world and to notice the beauty and love in the world.'”

This sense of delight is a deeper truth she can reconcile with experiences of grief and disease. Delight at being “at one with the earth and the dirt [...] as well as the purity and everything that is up” is her eventual aim, with her feet on the bare earth. In both places, Sivani Mata balances between the two fallen states of mundane self-pity and denial of the lived experience. Deities such as the ones chosen in this co-practice that express abundant beauty, humble rootedness and these contradictions of “shadow” and “light” are particularly loved.

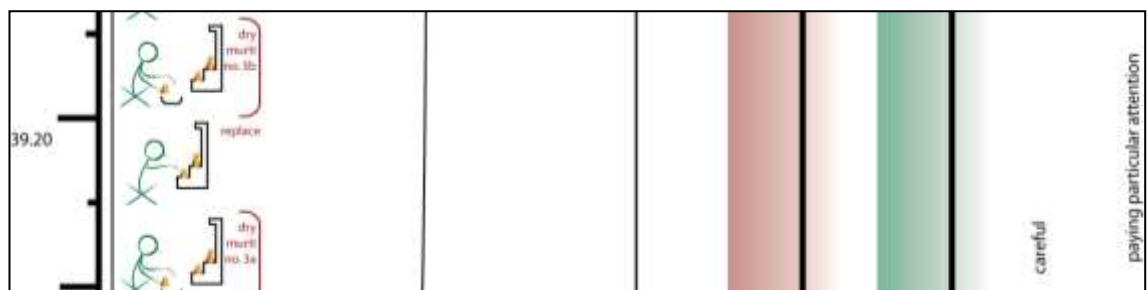


Fig. 47a. Case study 4: Washing Babaji's sandals



Fig. 47b. Case study 4: Washing Babaji's sandals

Sivani Mata talks less of her relationship to the guru, and more of the archetype of Babaji as both worldly and divine. For her, the tiny *mūrtis* of his sandals being washed fig. 47, on the previous page, are the perfect embodiment of the everyday meeting points between human and divine, earth and sky. Our rightful state is between what she calls the “love making” of earth and sky, in which, experiences of the sacred can spill over into a more delighted experience of everyday lived experience.

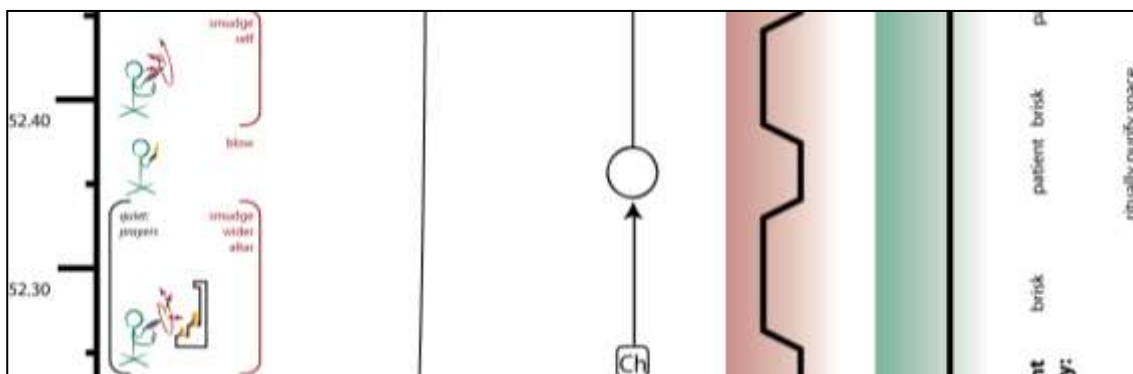
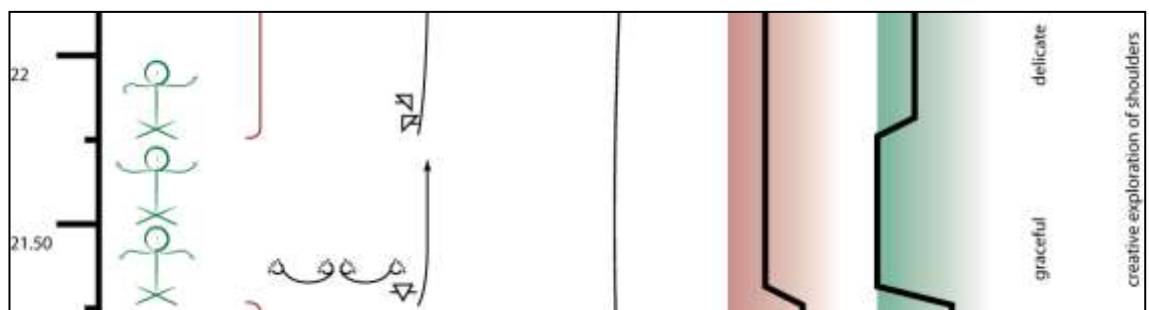


Fig. 48a. Case study 4: Purifying with smoke



Fig. 48b. Case study 4: Purifying with smoke

For Sivani Mata *bhakti* denies neither other possible routes to devotion, nor the mundane world. An hour of ritual cleansing reclaims the pre-existent perfection of self, *mūrti*, world and deity. Offerings of fruit and light and voice express a remembrance of abundance. Movement (as in fig. 50) and song (seen in fig. 49 above) are an artist's reclamation of holistic beauty. Sivani Mata's practice is deliberately grounded, but graceful rather than visceral.

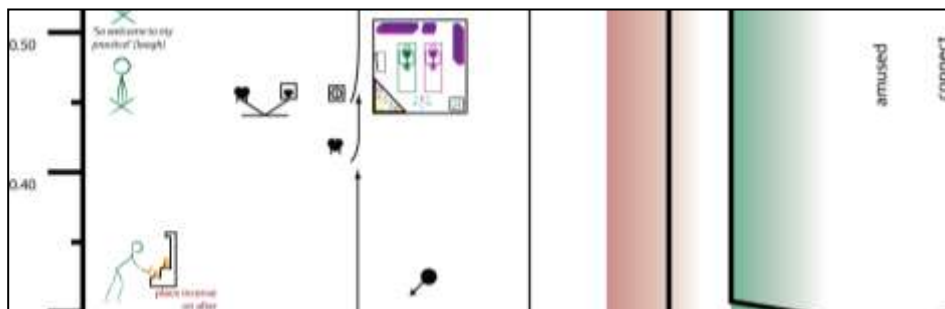


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Fig. 50b. Case study 4: Grace in movement

## Case study 5: “building nerves of steel” with building blocks of practice



### 5.1 Lineage and authority

We settle into Tanya’s tiny yoga room where a corner altar overflows with *mūrtis*, crystals, incense and flowers. Behind us can just be seen a stack of bolsters and blankets for teaching yoga. Our co-practice begins with *mantras* and contemplation during which the aim and form of the session intuitively arise for Tanya. This is followed by a few basic stretches like the ones in fig. 51, and the Kundalini Yoga practices of *śaṭkriyā*, and the first of many variations of the pumping breath of fire, instructions and context for both of which can be found on the 3HO

website (Bhajan 2008b). Breath of fire is a forceful breathing practice common in Kundalini Yoga, used to create heat and energy in the body, and a common feature of various sessions at Tanya's camp, Sundara.

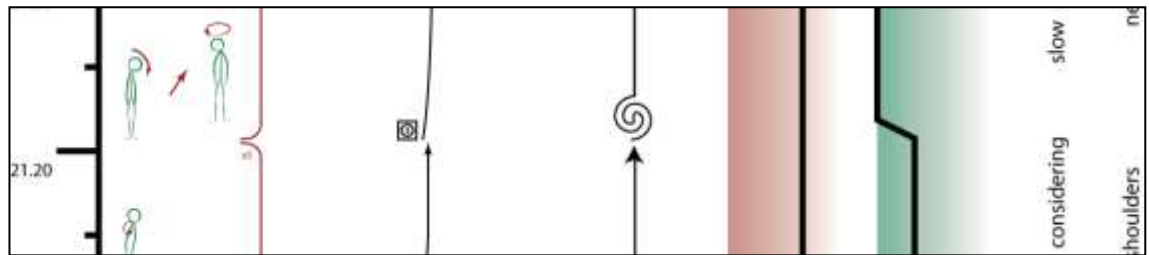


Fig. 51. Case study 5: Starting stretches

After a more generic Hatha Yoga sun salutation, the main body of the practice is a much more complex Kundalini Yoga sequence of combined breath, movement and *mantra* designed to activate the pituitary gland. It includes more breath of fire. Following this, a short *śavāsana* (supine rest) with crystals laid on the body provides another intuited answer for the following part of the practice: a Kundalini Yoga meditation “for ending habituation patterns” (Bhajan 2008a), and another to “rebuild the identity” that includes a complex *prāṇāyāma* (breath practice) involving suspending the breath for set periods (Bhajan 2017). The final part of the session, as seen in fig. 52, is a *bhakti* practice also influenced by the Babaji lineage: chanting, stillness, and prayers to close.

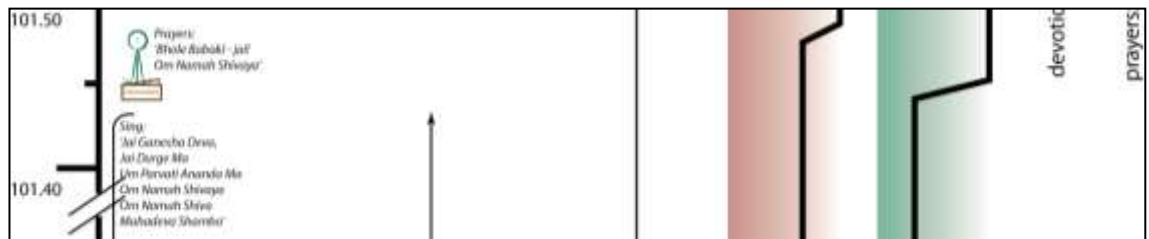


Fig. 52a. Case study 5: Closing with *bhakti*



Fig. 52b. Case study 5: Closing with *bhakti*

Throughout, Tanya's relationship to the practice is steady and controlled. Shapes are often held for a specific length of time, according to pre-set instructions, to serve a particular internal energetic effect. Like my other case studies, Tanya combines traditions without adherence to any single teacher. She describes herself as a follower of "the path of love and service".

"It really is on a day-to-day basis. If I wake up tomorrow morning and I'm not feeling Kundalini Yoga, I don't do Kundalini Yoga."

Movements are drawn from a range of sources, and some are spontaneous or adapted. But when performing the Kundalini Yoga sequences Tanya adheres closely to orthopraxy. She offers the possibility of using "the *Vedas* or the ancient Sanskrit scriptures" to put one's own *kriyās* (cleansing practices) together. But in her experience repeated practice leads to a deeper understanding of the wisdom embedded in the premade Kundalini Yoga sequences. "Once you begin to really truly understand all the elements [...] you know why those elements are in there."



Fig. 53a. Case study 5: Setting the timer



Fig. 53b. Case study 5: Setting the timer

Tanya's practice exists in sections of time sliced by the chimes of a meditation app as demonstrated in fig. 53, above. The pre-set building blocks of practice described above fit together according to the clearly arising intuition of the moment. Here the practice is a series of programmes with discrete functions to elevate lived experience and boost (inter)personal evolution. Each precisely timed block is bracketed by more mundane moments, spent checking notes and resetting the timer.



And yet within those pre-set blocks the emergent needs of the body make themselves known. In some long holds, a weakening body needs to be readjusted. Coughs disrupt the long periods of breath of fire. To pause, to weaken, or rearrange one's grip, as in fig. 54 (over page), is an accepted part of the lived reality of the practice beyond its standardised rules. Tanya maintains her equanimity between external targets and the reality of constant compromise. To her, we are perfect souls imperfectly manifested, following each other on the slow path to greater realised perfection.

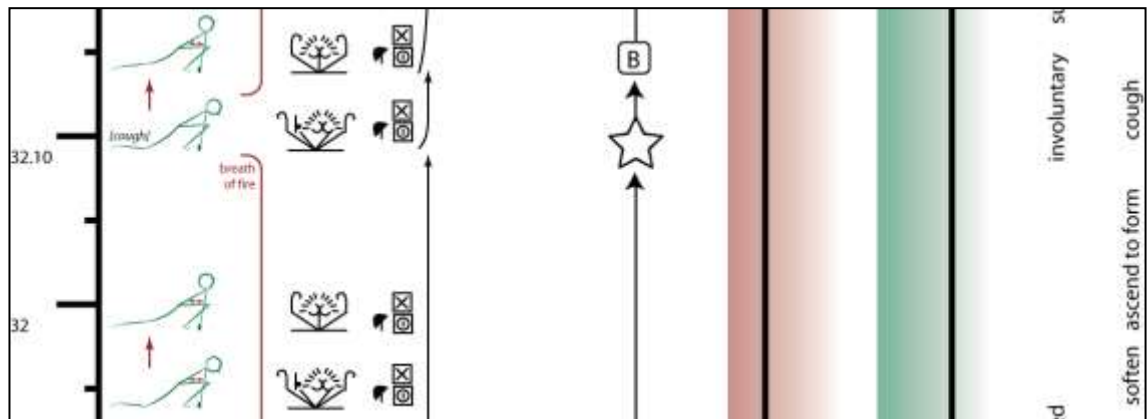


Fig. 54a. Case study 5: A moment to readjust



Fig. 54b. Case study 5: A moment to readjust

## 5.2 Intentions and outcomes

Whether reducing addictive patterns of behaviour or increasing intuition, Tanya's practice intentions are concerned with changing the lived behaviour of the individual, framed within a humanist hermeneutic that focuses on our relationships with others. The relationship between researcher and researched is more evident here than in any other case study. As seen in fig. 55, Tanya explains her intent and clarifies points of internal processes to me between each block of practice.



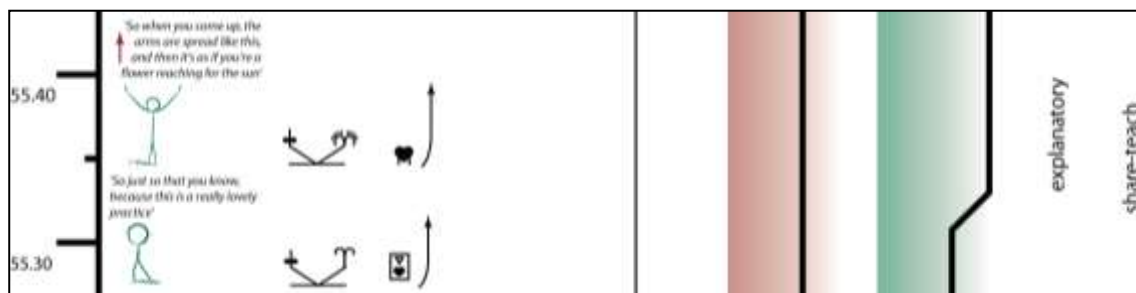


Fig. 55a. Case study 5: Explaining intentions

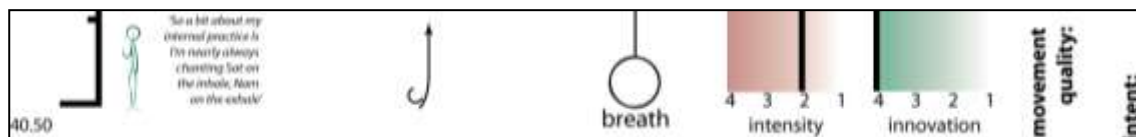


Fig. 55b. Case study 5: Explaining intentions

Despite many material additions to the practice space, for Tanya all space is equal. Home and away, field, canvas and brick and mortar are unified within a field of vibration, in which the crystals and other objects shown in fig. 56, are tools to a purpose, whilst the gods, spirits and humans, move with agency. “You're invoking that energy [because] you've sat in there for years [...]. But energy is energy.”

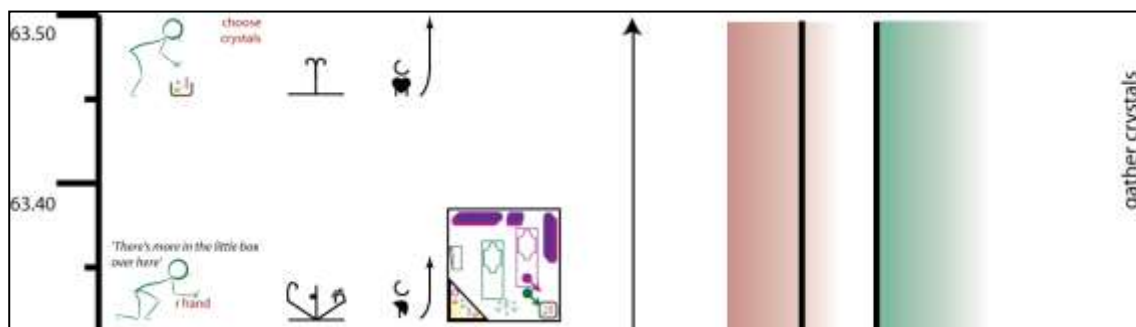


Fig. 56a. Case study 5: Choosing crystals



Fig. 56b. Case study 5: Choosing crystals

Tanya's yoga has always been shaped by the beings she has shared it with, since taking her mother to their first yoga class as a teenager. For her we learn through reflecting each other. Within that relational matrix, Tanya maintains a distinctly pre-modern epistemology. The Kundalini Yoga method works "on the ten bodies, [...] the neutral, the positive, the negative mind, [...] the *cakras*, [and] the *nāḍīs*" of the energetic self. The practice is a sequenced technology of energetic actions, accompanied by a consistently repeated internal *mantra*.

Rising on the endless breath of fire is *Kuṇḍalinī* (liberatory) energy in the service of spiritual evolution. The resulting trance state is not ecstatic, but clearing, erasing *saṃskāras* (imperfections). The physical functionality of movement exists within the larger functionality of the whole self, evolving from moment to moment within an energetic, interpersonal matrix.

The raising of *Kuṇḍalinī* energy within an internal matrix, and the physiological stimulation of the nervous system are identical in form. The body is held in a series of what could be considered stress positions, clenching *bandhas* (body locks) and squeezing the belly and jaw while repeating internal *mantras* a set number of times, as seen in fig. 57, in what might be considered to be a compulsive manner. Reminiscent of the latest researches into early postural yoga by Mallinson and Singleton (2017), *mantra* and meaning are forcefully inscribed onto either the energetic body, or the psychosomatised memory of lived experience, depending on one's epistemological understanding. The former serves the evolution of the greater self, the latter could build either stress resilience or obsessive dependence on the method.

The clenching teeth, pumping breaths and held *bandha* (body locks) that are set components of the Kundalini Yoga practice, and shown in the notation below, stand in opposition to the movement quality of soft bellies, eyes and tongues also found within post-lineage yoga culture. Yet any compulsive tension in Tanya's practice is softened by moments of adjustment, rest and contemplation. The rising, drying fire of Kundalini Yoga meets the fluidity of post-lineage adaptation, and in the process, the nervous system may be tempered into steel. A sense of self-reliance is born of realising that every *kriyā* ends, every sensation passes.

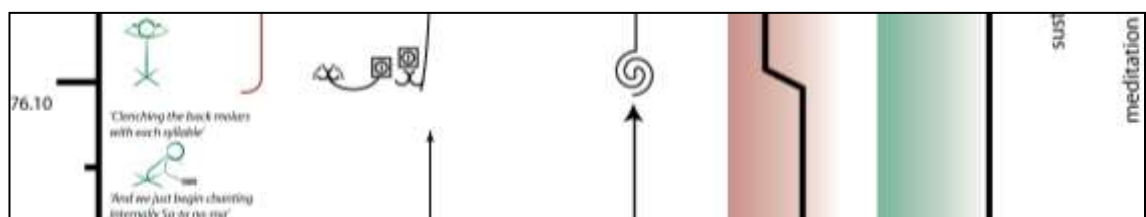
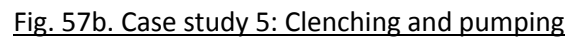


Fig. 57a. Case study 5: Clenching and pumping



**Physical Education**

**1. Deep Breathe** - Inhale deeply through the nose, hold for 10 seconds, then exhale slowly through the mouth. Repeat 10 times.

**2. Deep Breathe** - Inhale deeply through the nose, hold for 10 seconds, then exhale slowly through the mouth. Repeat 10 times.

**3. Diaphragm** - Inhale deeply through the nose, hold for 10 seconds, then exhale slowly through the mouth. Repeat 10 times.

**4. Deep Breathe** - Inhale deeply through the nose, hold for 10 seconds, then exhale slowly through the mouth. Repeat 10 times.

**5. Diaphragm** - Inhale deeply through the nose, hold for 10 seconds, then exhale slowly through the mouth. Repeat 10 times.

**6. Deep Breathe** - Inhale deeply through the nose, hold for 10 seconds, then exhale slowly through the mouth. Repeat 10 times.

**7. Diaphragm** - Inhale deeply through the nose, hold for 10 seconds, then exhale slowly through the mouth. Repeat 10 times.

**8. Deep Breathe** - Inhale deeply through the nose, hold for 10 seconds, then exhale slowly through the mouth. Repeat 10 times.

**9. Diaphragm** - Inhale deeply through the nose, hold for 10 seconds, then exhale slowly through the mouth. Repeat 10 times.

**10. Deep Breathe** - Inhale deeply through the nose, hold for 10 seconds, then exhale slowly through the mouth. Repeat 10 times.

The photograph on the right shows a classroom with students performing these exercises. They are standing in rows, facing forward, and following the instructions from the textbook. The room has large windows with curtains, and the students are dressed in casual clothing.

## Case study 6: “one step in the world and one step in spirit”



## 6.1 Lineage and authority

I meet Nicole at a yoga studio in Bristol, where she is later leading a workshop that includes *āsana*, meditation and *mantra*, but also a South American tobacco pipe ritual. For the co-practice we are alone in the quiet, empty studio. We aim for, and complete, a 45-minute practice. The session feels outside of mundane time and removed from the camp sub-culture, yet contained and held by both.

Nicole's practice that day is internally focused, yet without extended periods of seated contemplation. The metaphysical framework of the practice conforms to common subcultural associations of elemental symbolism familiar from Uma and other case studies, and with a complex, but long-established history in yoga thought (White 1984: 43). But the exact intent of each movement in this individual practice is so internal, and its expression so fluid, that it can be difficult to precisely confirm before the interview. Rarely does a single body part lead. Instead fingers curl into specific *mudrās* to seal a particular effect. There are few repeated refrains in the *āsanas*, but the quality of movement is consistent and poised, particularly the early sections of the practice seen in fig. 59 which are generally symmetrical. Elegance is enhanced by Nicole's small but long limbed, extremely mobile frame.

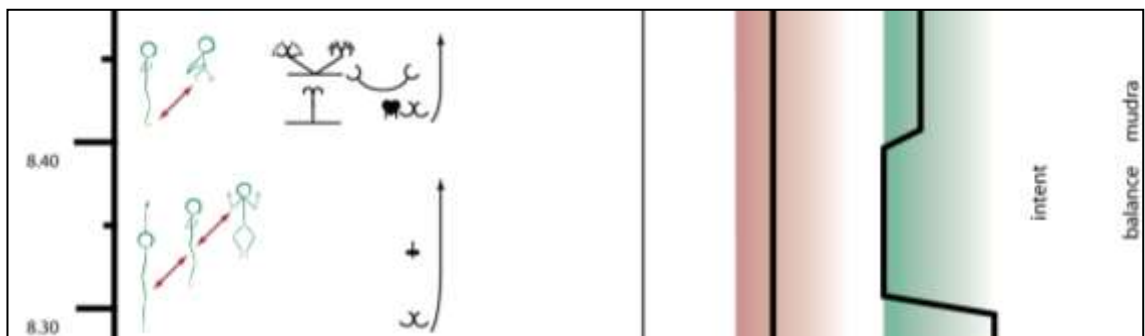


Fig. 59. Case study 6: Symmetrical postures

This is a practice seeking balance in the energetic relationships of the esoteric self and surrounding space. Nicole moves fluidly through *āsana* and Kundalini Yoga *kriyās*, whilst using specific breath patterns to slide from one state of mild trance to another. The intensity of the practice rises and falls again in a series of steady waves.

In fig. 60, Nicole includes a side lunging flow sequence similar to Christopher's, and a non-linear Shadow Yoga sequence.

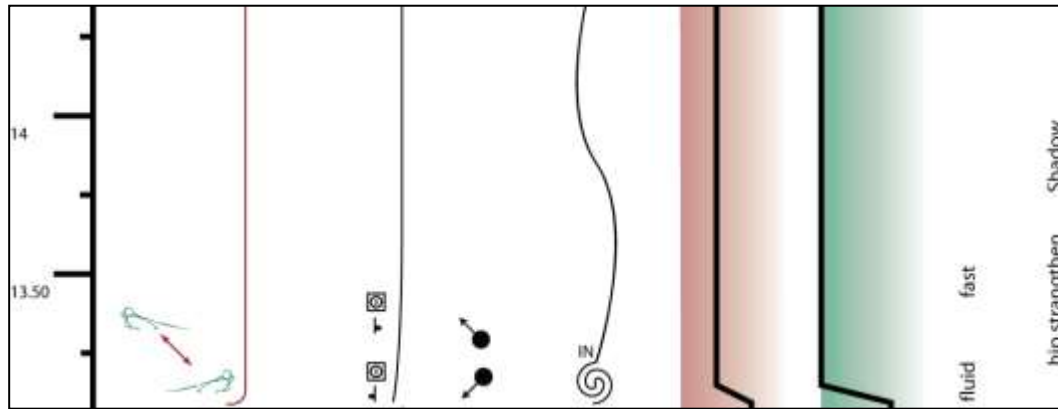


Fig. 60a. Case study 6: Non-linear elements



Fig. 60b. Case study 6: Non-linear elements

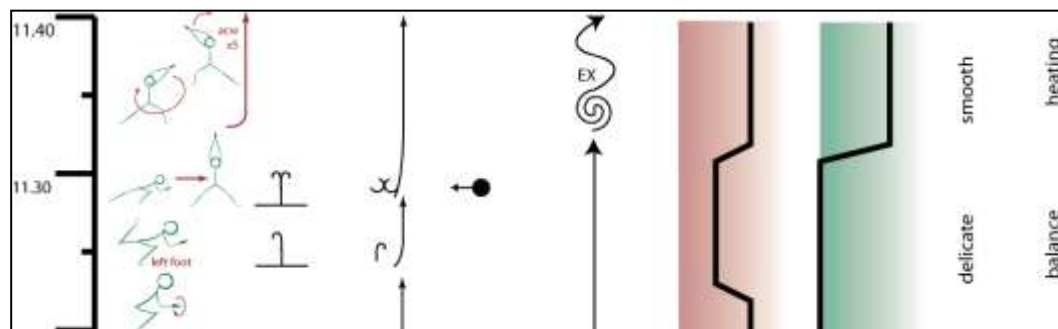


Fig. 60c. Case study 6: Non-linear elements



Fig. 60d. Case study 6: Non-linear elements

Her Kundalini Yoga training is used to charge or release esoteric energies in specific ways. In fig. 61 (over page), she employs the forced exhale of a *kapālabhātī* breathing practice, and a version of *ujjayi* breath with an open-mouthed exhale to release energy downwards, as well as

the pumping breath of fire to lift or increase vitality. Each of these is adapted from the orthodox versions, lifted out of set sequences or performed in a non-standard *āsana*.

Explaining the day's practice, Nicole says:

“Some of [the movement] needed to be slow, because I couldn't quite move the energy. And then [...] I sometimes did some more intense kind of *kriyā*-like movements to release it.”

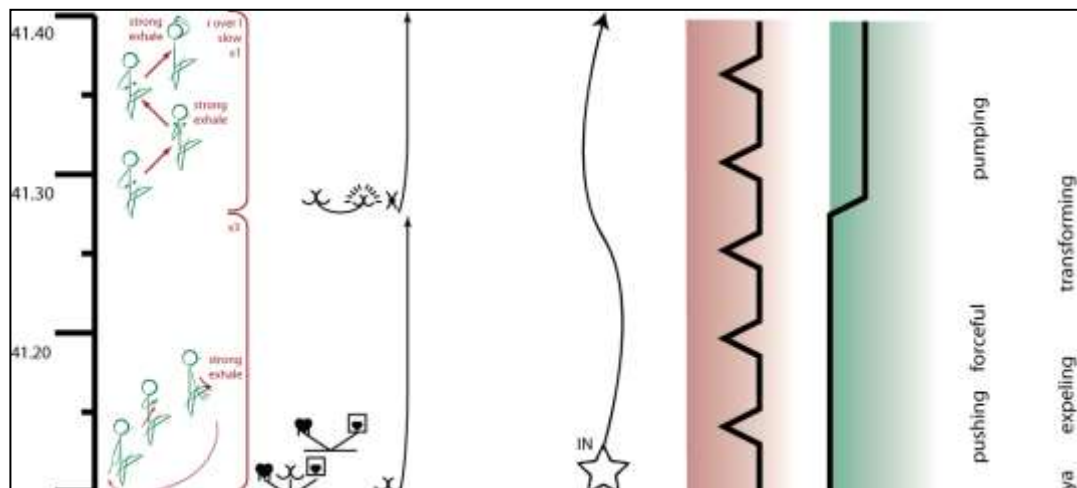


Fig. 61a. Case study 6: Adapting *prāṇāyāma*



Fig. 61b. Case study 6: Adapting *prāṇāyāma*

For Nicole her yoga is also consistent with her shamanic training and practice, because it brings in: “a sense of sacred and ceremony.” She performs a lot of the practice with eyes closed, processing and transforming esoteric energies that she feels have accumulated either in dreams or the events of the day, and relying on her kinetic senses. Nicole also has an affinity with *yoganidrā* and lucid dreaming as described by LaBerge (1985), saying of her future practice “if there's anywhere I'm travelling, I'm going that way.”

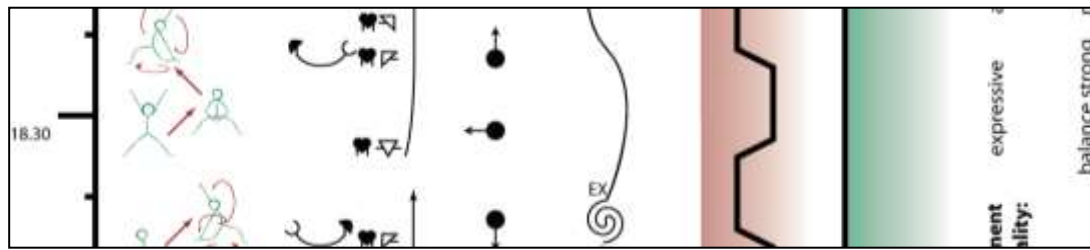


Fig. 62a. Case study 6: Practicing to the four directions

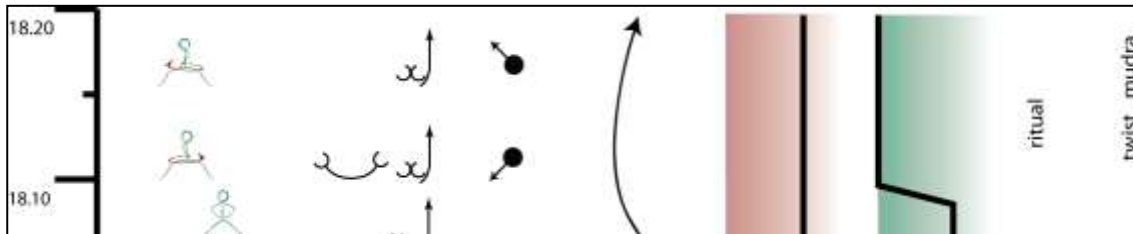


Fig. 62b. Case study 6: Practicing to the four directions



Fig. 62c. Case study 6: Practicing to the four directions

She credits her shamanic practice with rendering fluid her personal history as well as personal geography, leaving her unsure of how long she's been teaching (over 25 years), or even her age. "I've lost a sense of time in a linear way." Shamanic intuition renders visible patterns beneath the everyday that help Nicole to navigate this non-linearity. Nicole sees "medicine wheels everywhere". Just as Uma's practice visits each element in turn, and Sivani Mata's turns to ritually meet the points of the compass, her *āsana* practice, as seen in fig. 62, above, moves to each of the four directions of a South American medicine wheel.



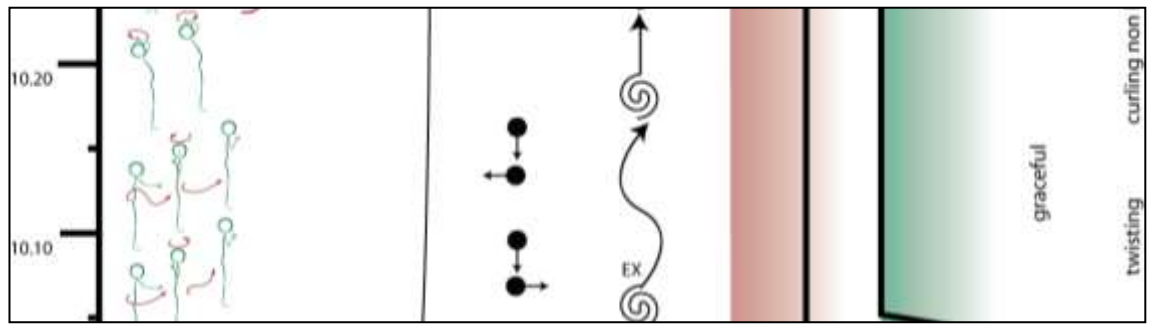


Fig. 63a. Case study 6: Spirals and infinity symbols

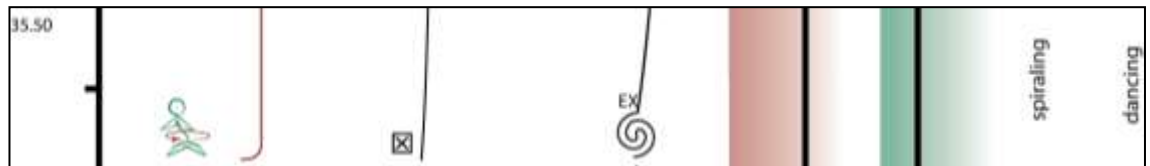


Fig. 63b. Case study 6: Spirals and infinity symbols



Fig. 63c. Case study 6: Spirals and infinity symbols

A number of the shapes described by Nicole's body in *āsana* as in fig. 63, above, are curved or spiralled, or trace one of her favourite symbols, the mathematical infinity sign. Symbolism is also bodily encoded through *mudrā*: hand gestures for different metaphysical elements, and the sub-culturally common '*yoni mudrā*', used to signify generative life force in nature. Just as her fingers hold to a shifting series of precise *mudrā* positions, so Nicole's tongue is placed or rolled across different parts of the upper palate, in an innovated echo of traditional *hathayoga* practices. The practice evolves through intuition rather than deliberation.





Fig. 64. Case study 6: Working with hypermobility

As an online article by Birney (2016) speculates, many yoga teachers in the wider transnational yoga culture are innately hypermobile, and so is Nicole, as we can see in fig. 64, above. She failed her Iyengar teaching exams twice for being “too flexible”, and she credits later practices of internal awareness for helping her learn to be strong to mitigate this tendency. As her physical rigour increased, so deepened her study of metaphysics. And that esoteric ecology provides a shorthand for describing somatic changes.

“The Kundalini [Yoga] was good, I gained a lot of core fire [strength]. I never had a lot of fire. I had a lot of air. A lot of space. A lot of water. Not much earth and not much fire. So I've had to develop those things.”

Within the practice, *kriyās* and *āsana* sequences shift and transform esoteric energy, whilst *mudrās* and *prāṇāyāma* practices channel that energy. Nicole begins each day and practice with raising her *agni*: her digestive fire. Within our co-practice, that digesting fire is drawn through the body sequentially, as in fig. 65:

“I'm creating fire in my belly, in my heart and in my third eye in order for me to digest things on those levels.”



Fig. 65a. Case study 6: Transforming esoteric energy



Fig. 65b. Case study 6: Transforming esoteric energy

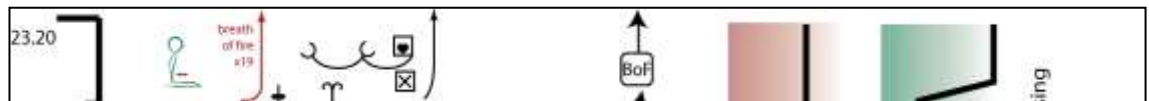


Fig. 65c. Case study 6: Transforming esoteric energy



Fig. 65d. Case study 6: Transforming esoteric energy

The practice ends at the point that Nicole feels entirely “cooked”, a state which she describes as a “constant balance of energies”, free of any emotional or physical sensation that could be experienced as distorting the flow between intent and action. This may be close to Veronika’s equanimity, or Sivani Mata’s place of balance, although her framing points to a state different again from the former’s gentle frugality or the latter’s abundant oasis. Like them, having checked the inner landscape of the self for obstructions and distortions, Nicole

“can spend the day having one step in the world and one step in spirit without feeling and being pulled in any one direction.”

For Nicole, inner landscapes reflect, affect, and are affected by external ones. Whilst she has a dedicated space at home, with an altar that she always returns to, she is at home wherever she teaches, and “can practise anywhere these days”. She contrasts this with her need to keep a “consistent space” around her when she first began yoga. While her reactivity to the immediate ecology of the practice may have diminished, her sensitivity to it has not. She describes arriving at the studio for our practice and feeling “the energies of a lot of other people”. In fig. 66, we can see her moving around and settling below, and she says later that the “room was not settled”, blurring the boundary between herself and the space.

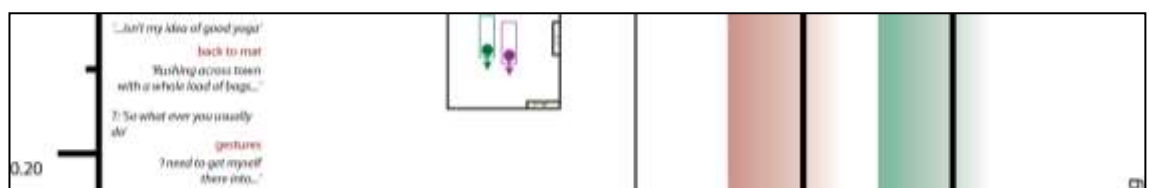


Fig. 66. Case study 6: Settling into the space

Nicole voices a statement I have heard from many practitioners: that over time, less practice is needed to gain the same results. And as her practice has developed to be more achievable in energetically uncomfortable spaces, so Nicole feels she has gained the power to change her immediate energetic ecology through the practice. She is evidently much more settled by the end of the practice, as seen in fig. 67.



Fig. 67. Case study 6: Completing the practice

Nicole's disconnect from the mundane world and preference for intimate ecological negotiation are reflected in her ambivalence to wider yoga culture. As a teacher who firmly positions herself on the edges of even post-lineage yoga culture, Nicole is yet clear that even personal evolution is delivered through a combination of "years of practice" and relationships with other people. Echoing Christopher, she says:

"Guru is a process. Guru is a community. Guru is not an individual and it's not something that's ever fixed in time and space. How could it be?"

## 6.2 Intentions and outcomes

Nicole's practice, like others, is a search for balance in which the boundaries between the physical and the energetic, the internal and the external, become porous. The result, as seen above, is a unique iteration of post-lineage practice. Like others, her skillset has been gathered from a range of sources, in a long history of individual practice. She, like others, offers no shortcuts to this extensive, individualised learning process. There are occasional moments in our interview which are almost hagiographic, including her insistence never to have been injured, nor missed a single day of practice since she began.

This self-narrativisation is poetic rather than strictly logical, of a piece with the hypnotic way she leads students. But her desire for genuine, and generous relationship is clear. Nicole's identity is performed and reformed through her daily practice. In it can be traced the tension

between her connection to post-lineage sub-culture, and her pervasive sense of difference from others. She dances gracefully through the quiet studio space with her own history, her unique morphology, but also with myself and the space as equally unique practice partners.

I am consistently aware of the different ways her body can move, as an invitation she is making back to my own uniqueness. Her favourite *āsana* is bound lotus (see fig. 68, over page), which she can achieve without preparation, but which her students might never attempt. The practice she teaches is much more accessible, but there is a contained and charismatic ethereality to those sessions in which her unusual morphology combines with practised, graceful movement, hypnotic storytelling and esoteric knowledge to create a space that feels like a magical invitation.

Nicole's practice enacts her separation from the mundane world: from time, from geography, even at times from human biomechanics. Despite her modest awareness of her own popularity within the subculture, I found myself asking how much of Nicole's identity is cultivated, and how much a response to experiences, and how performative was the process of exploration? With all of my respondents, personal and professional identities meet, merge and are deliberately reformed in the process of practice. As we shall see in the following chapters, they are no less real as a result.

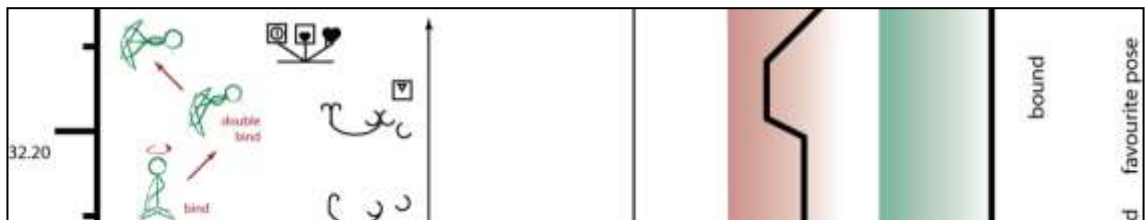


Fig. 68a. Case study 6: Bound lotus



Fig. 68b. Case study 6: Bound lotus

## Conclusion

Despite numerous common inspirations for their practice, each of these case studies is unique, not only in the detail of their practice history, their intentions and outcomes, but also as scholarly data. Determining the differences between individual post-lineage practice and other forms of contemporary and historical yoga is complicated by the near absence of research into this, the (near) daily confirmation at the heart of every long-term practitioner's allegiance to the practice of yoga.

Nonetheless, the diverse negotiations with lineage and authority displayed herein demonstrate the centrality of this issue to the process of developing and sustaining a post-lineage practice. Every moment described here is marked by both a deference to received wisdom, and intuited choices to be made by the individual in the absence, or even in rejection, of external authority. But that individual self is not only the final authority, but also the location, distant goal, and outcome of practice itself, freighted with the weight of history and expectation.

The resulting themes in intention and outcome drawn out of each case study are closely linked to themes already found in my fieldwork. A series of productive tensions are emerging, across the borders between self and other, authority and intuition, and between enhanced awareness, increased equanimity, and effective change. Putting them into context necessitated another major output of the thesis that I will turn to next: determining the common framework underpinning the lived experience of individual practice.

## 7. The structure of individual practice

Every *interpersonal* aspect of post-lineage yoga depends upon the generative power of regular *intrapersonal* practice, and thus it merits much deeper consideration. In taught practice, it is possible, although as I will show, not inevitable, for a single teacher to be responsible for choosing the intent and form of practice for a whole group or community of practitioners. When that foundational authority becomes formalised into prescribed practice routines, each practitioner carries that deference to external authority into their regular individual practice, shadowing the movements and rhythms they first learned by rote. In theory, this is the method by which modern postural yoga lineages and brands reproduce themselves: increasing the number of practitioners whilst maintaining a centrally controlled uniformity for the intentions, outputs and form of practice.

But within post-lineage practice, that hierarchy of knowledge is largely disrupted. Thus, the *group* sessions of post-lineage events may be taught on a spectrum of more or less prescriptive instruction, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 9. But the *individual* practices of post-lineage yoga are without any single, external and above all stable reference to determine the practice. In individual practice, the post-lineage practitioner may be negotiating deference to any number of sources of authority, all subject to the ultimate authority of the 'inner self'.

The ongoing evolution of post-lineage yoga is inherent to that negotiated authority. Within the centralised knowledge hierarchies of brand and lineage, a practitioner might possibly innovate as part of their individual practice, but such innovations only translate into the shared repertoire of the practice community as a whole through narrow and officially sanctioned routes. In most cases, only the most senior teachers and originators or inheritors of the practice system have the right to add to that repertoire. In contrast, post-lineage practice is generated both in taught and individual practice, and above all in the relationship between them. Taught and individual practice are the two pillars of post-lineage yoga.

The previous chapter introduced a diverse range of responses to this issue of changing authority, as well as some emerging themes and varying intentions employed as part of the immediate process of choosing practice elements. Within that diversity, this chapter considers the most common preoccupations that practitioners bring to their practice. But it then demonstrates the common intuited typologies and structures into which any possible inspiration for post-lineage practice can be fitted. To the extent that each person, and each practice, diversifies authority beyond a single lineage or brand, one could expect very similar processes and themes to emerge in any post-lineage subculture.

## Themes emerging from the case studies

Through Veronika's case study I have shown the common conception that practice is a balance between incremental self-transformation and equanimity. Hers is the first of multiple visions of a reclamation or evolution to a pristine state of being, somehow both somatically remembered and logically unimaginable. Here too, I show her faith in both the gift of human self-awareness, and a more animistic love of all (animate) things.

Christopher's self-maintenance is concerned with the most appropriate response to a challenging world. His is a scientific animism of the body as what he refers to as a "microbial inner temple". Here I delineate two themes to question further: the implications of a disconnect between practice as it appears and is experienced for both research and teacher-student relations; and the marks of invisible authority left by a practice history on the invisible yoga mat as a boundary for practice. Is truly spontaneous movement likely, given the ingrained habits of an individual?

The map for Uma's understanding of her abundant practice territory is based in commonly understood elemental metaphysics, as part of a practice ecology that has agency as well as impact. Repeated practice with those metaphysical qualities, as a kind of experiential mnemonics, functions to re-pattern the somatic body. It renders into flesh subcultural metaphors such as waves of movement or lunar and menstrual metaphysics. The ability to call into being and embody such metaphors at will also confers teaching charisma and personal empowerment.

Sivani Mata's practice renders her devotion to self and land more explicit still, through layered and repeated gestures of ritual that are both intuited and learnt. This case study outlines a number of productive tensions between purification and nourishment, inside and outside, lineage and inspiration. Here we also encounter the useful metaphor of practice as a healing oasis, in which arises a ritual incantation and identification of self with other, world and deity.

Tanya's case study shows a very different practice. It combines Veronika's ontological humanism with the clearest influence of Kundalini Yoga and New Age esoteric understandings. This is a distinctly non-secular, supra-rational practice. Here, individual practice is a modular programme based on intuited choices from among the pre-existing wisdom of others.

Nicole's case study returns to many of these themes, from metaphysical energies, to the pristine self and the enduring balance between external authority and self-reliance. She states most clearly the long-term benefits of individual practice and the lack of possible short-cuts.

This case study also shows how otherworldly personal qualities can be managed and cultivated by practice, forming the conscious or unconscious basis for charismatic teaching.

Within the day-to-day, moment-to-moment lived endeavour of individual practice, such qualities are practised, performed, analysed and explored, but they are no less real a part of individual identity as a result. What is becoming clear is how each practice variously aims to manage a disconnect between a wild or unique present self, an ideal or pristine self, and an ecology that can be mundane and depleting, or authentic and nourishing. Through diverse incarnations of these evolving relationships, post-lineage yoga practitioners produce resilience and self-nourishment, hagiography and charisma and above all, newly authentic narratives of the self to be celebrated by the wider subculture.

There are common connections between shapes of movement and cultural reference points, such as: 'masculine' teaching styles; pumping breaths for transformation; and the overlapping metaphysical maps of elements, ritual directions and medicine wheels. Through these the practitioner creates a blended practice to deconstruct and reconstruct the relational fluidity of self, other, ecology and deity, in a performance language created from metaphysical associations. Each practitioner firmly believes that there is a personalised remedy for every condition, and a training protocol for every human quality, if the practitioner can hold faith with the practice as a process of self-awareness and self-nurture, with one eye on the ideal of the pristine self.

In post-practice interviews all respondents spent some time weaving coherent narrative histories, and linking themselves to common reference points of lineage and non-lineage influence: Iyengar, Sivananda, Ashtanga, but also Shadow, Reflex Yoga and Shakti Dance. They all centred our discussion on authority, relationship, self-reliance, intention and practice. Questions immediately arose about the relationship of intention to lived experience and narrative framing. What is at stake, what is recovered, and what is elided by the emerging narrative of the performed, reconstructed self? In what ways is that self changed by the trace of other people on the learnt practice? What of the teacher is imprinted along with the practices taught?

The implications are profound, given that all the case studies consider their practice to be devotional in some form, to the archetype of the guru and the gods, to life itself, to the spirits of the land, although none to a single, defined deity. Outside of the camps, in individual practice identity is constantly re-forged through long-term, ritualised, visceral experiments in ontology. This movement eases breath. That bodily shape connects one to the land. This ritual washing recalls the profane and sacred nature of both self and teacher. All of them are in



remembrance of, invocation to, and actualised steps towards a unique better self, and yet also towards a complex subcultural history. The case studies show a deliberate porousness of the postural and metaphysical, the physical and esoteric, and of rational health and soteriological intentions.

## Some common intentions driving the shape of individual practice

From yoga's inception, physical, psychological, spiritual and social benefits have been attributed interchangeably to practice elements (Mallinson and Singleton 2017). In my fieldwork, and in contemporary postural yoga more widely, intention aligns closely with epistemology, in that what can be reached for in practice is constrained by what can be known about the self through the body. Sometimes practice reaches for an external ideal for the body or its behaviours to align with, and is characterised by the internalisation of models. Individual practice with this intent to perfect involves processes of self-correction. From structuralist theories the concepts of biopower and habitus are useful for analysing this tendency further (Coleman and Grove 2009: 490; Lizardo 2004). Christopher's and Veronika's practices have shown this tendency most clearly.

Sometimes practice appeals more to the somatic self, reaching for "natural" or "authentic" experiences. When this intention is invoked, self-practice aims to develop proprioceptive and interoceptive sensitivity. The self-awareness that results is more phenomenological in nature, in that meaning is found through the lived experience and intimate connection between body and world. Practitioners operating with this lens of understanding would agree with Bruno Latour that the body is a "dynamic trajectory by which we learn to register and become sensitive to what the world is made of" (2004: 206). Uma's and Sivani Mata's practices have shown this tendency most clearly.

At other times practice has esoteric aims, characterised by the repetition of formulas of shape, sound and intention that pattern the physical self with a more-than-physical energetic body, or resonate in harmony with energies believed to be of divine origin. Here, discussions of the epistemological map itself are also useful. Post-lineage yoga conforms to what David Gordon White describes as "ayurvedic and hatha yogic traditions [that] conceive of the human body as a microcosmic replica of the universal macrocosm" (2006: 3). But it breaks with early modern postural yoga that intended to create a Patanjalian body, impervious to the world (Burley 2014: 218). It is more strongly aligned with older yogic traditions in cultivating a bodily microcosm that is open and interactive to the macrocosmic universe (White 2006: 12). Tanya's

and Nicole's practices have shown this tendency most clearly. In reality, many post-lineage practices bring together self-corrective, self-sensitising, and supernatural elements, blending these three approaches.

## An initial typology of practice elements

As I have stated, although there have been many attempts to catalogue yoga practices into different categories, there is no common catalogue of yoga practice elements for either the pre-modern or modern period. Those schools that attempt to categorise *āsana* in particular do so most commonly according to the biophysical intention that the school has assigned to each practice element, reflecting repeated attempts to systemise practice into a therapeutic model. Individual *āsana* are in this way grouped into categories such as 'hip openers' or 'backbends', dependent on the assumption that every *āsana* can be reduced to a single shape and intention.

More useful for this thesis is the provisional typology of yoga practice that I provide below. My categorisation is based not on the diverse possible intentions or outcomes of each element, but on movement *qualities* that can categorise *āsana*, and also the *kriyās*, *prāṇāyāma* and even *pūjās* common to post-lineage yoga at these camps, workshops and events.

<i>Element type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Breath</i>	<i>Variations</i> ( <i>examples</i> )
Pauses	Held shapes as a destination or series of way stations within movement	Commonly held for multiple, sometimes counted numbers of breaths.  Sometimes entered on a specific phase of the breath	Pauses held for a few breaths ( <i>āsana</i> )
Pulsations	Rhythmic movements between two points.	Commonly in time with the breath	Metronomic movements to raise intensity ( <i>kriyās</i> )
			Evolving movements to explore somatic responses ( <i>pavanamuktāsana</i> )

<i>Element type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Breath</i>	<i>Variations (examples)</i>
Sequences	A series of emergent or pre-set movements that flow together	Conscious breathing, sometimes in time with movement	Recurring refrains of movement to warm, intensify intent or allow for movement without the logical burden of choice ( <i>vinyāsa</i> )
			Emergent or pre-set sequences with a single intent (hip opening)
Gestures	Movements of indication and invocation commonly made with the hands and/or head	Conscious breathing	Bowing and offering movements to externalised entities ( <i>praṇam</i> )
			Gestures of the hand used to infuse and seal intent ( <i>mudrās</i> )
Adjustments	Movements external to deliberate practice	Conscious or mundane breathing, dependent on how external to the practice	Adjustments to clothing, props, or position in the room, eye contact
		Often expelled exhalations	Releases of somatic tension (wriggling, shaking, sighing, joint adjustment)

<i>Element type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Breath</i>	<i>Variations (examples)</i>
Breath patterns	Specific breath patterns practised in pauses or pulsations	Specific breathing patterns	Rapid breath patterns that commonly enervate, sometimes practised in pulsations (breath of fire)
			Breath patterns that commonly calm, mostly practised in seated pauses (alternate nostril breathing)
Contemplations	Introspective practices almost always practised in seated or supine pauses	Slow, steady breathing	Seated contemplations (Vipassana meditation)
			Supine or prone practices of deep rest ( <i>yoganidrā</i> )

Each element is chosen for practice, being emergent in the moment, intuited from various media, or inspired by abstract reasoning. To become a regular element within a person's practice repertoire, movements pass through repetition into somatic memory: implicit and primal, and re-emerge as a response to associated stimuli.

Thus, particular results of a body scan will be associated with specific responses, and particular qualities in the inner or outer ecology will provoke the body to particular expressions of joy or irritation. Finally, when a movement is fully embodied and embedded through practice, it can be re-embodied at will, with all its associations and experiential qualities, and taught to others. When a teacher can model such a movement in a teaching situation, their teaching is more likely to be considered authentic.

## The structure of practice in detail

All the case studies, and practices observed during fieldwork, contain most of the above element types. They are arranged in a four-part practice cycle: practices designed to audit the self; practices drawn from an existing repertoire; experimental forms, and finally practices of enjoyment (see fig. 69). Regardless of specific intent or outcome, all post-lineage practitioners learn to develop this spiralling technology of inquiry, contemplation, action and reflection in a cyclical process of unravelling and remaking of the self that necessitates the authority to evolve their repertoire of practice. In this technology, consciously or not, they may have some commonalities with some pre-modern yogic practices (Mallinson and Singleton 2017: 7), but in their patterns of individualised authority they echo more closely many other practices of self-reflection for self-improvement common to the European counterculture (Heelas 1993: 105).

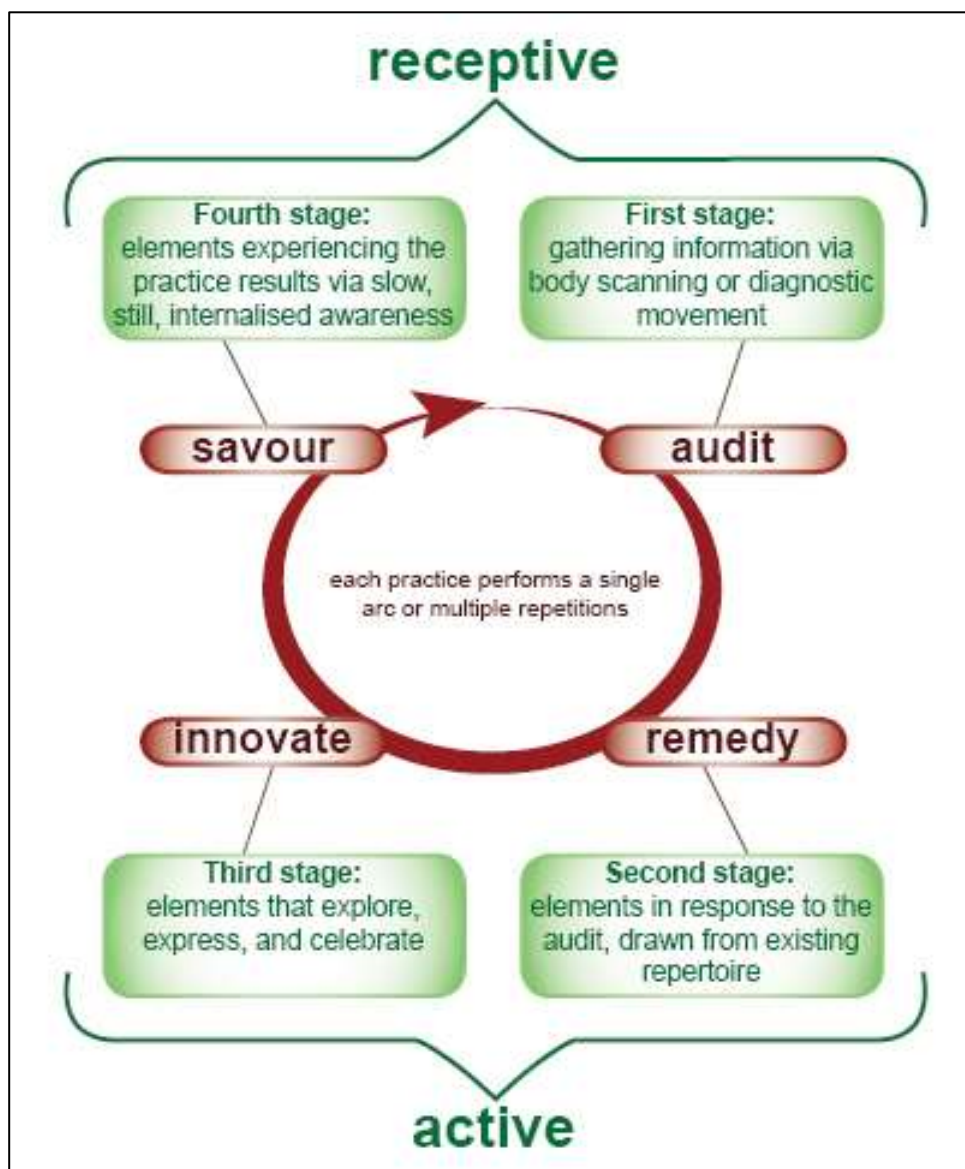


Fig. 69. The practice cycle

## Auditing the self

Above is a diagram of the practice cycle common to all the practices investigated in this research. In this model, audit and remedy precede the more expressive and reflective stages of each practice. Both are dependent on pre-existing frameworks: the audit depends on diagnostic tools and the remedy depends on a repertoire of practice. In the audit stage the conceptual maps and associated tools used to audit a living self also depend on what a practitioner believes it is possible to discover about one's own experience.

Almost universally, breath is considered to be the best adjunct tool for this analysis. As in wider contemporary yoga culture, breath is the interface between body and mind. This may be reflective of known biology. There is an intimate connection between physiology, neurology and affect, governed and expressed by breath and heart-rate (Depraz 2008: 9). This connectivity is widened further, as breath and life force are both included within the Sanskrit term *prāṇa* (Birch and Hargreaves 2015a). Thus, attention to the breath as a diagnostic tool enables investigation into all aspects of the body-mind and how they inter-relate.

Varying degrees of awareness or manipulation of the breath are associated with different states of the nervous system. They are key to diverse practice aims. They are therefore reflective of often tacit understandings of what it is that a practitioner can feel moving with the breath. These range from the most physical to the most esoteric: a process which Sivani Mata refers to as "allowing the breath to move you". Left unstated is a definition of the self that moves, or what can block its movement, as in the following description from a Hatha Yoga session at Colourfest: "Finding that nice balance in itself, so we can then meditate, breathe, without any tension or blockages."

In listening to practitioners talking about how the breath illuminates the body, there is a sense of an inner landscape textured with somatic possibility and mobility that is remarkably reminiscent of Laban's descriptions of the kinesphere: the reach of possible movement that surrounds and interpenetrates the body of the dancer (Longstaff 1996: 21). For many of these practitioners, the kinesphere, the esoteric self and the porous body are a continuum of lived and potential experience. The physical, psychological and ecological share such qualities as force and rigidity, softness and fluidity, heat, weight and dynamism. Exploring these mutual resonances, often in oppositions such as stillness and movement, empowers the practitioner to even greater depths of self-understanding and interpenetration with the world (White 1984: 43). And yet bodily mapping is always more contingent, more conflicted, than this description suggests (Graziano 2016: 129). For practitioners, the unified self-world-experience is an enduring object of practice precisely because it is unstable and non-verifiable.

Regardless of the detailed conceptions of individual practitioners, mind, body, world and spirit are connected “metonymically rather than metaphorically.” (Alter 2006: 769). This means that they are always porous categories of experience, in which practices for one, confer sympathetic magic to the rest. It is more useful to consider each practitioner, and each practice, as resonating with a particular configuration of self and world in a particular moment. That self-world configuration is always porous yet coherent. Thus, in one fieldwork session alone, one *āsana* is named the “cobra of wisdom”, thought patterns “dissolve with movement”, and we stand on one leg in tree pose to mimic the “tree of life”. In each case, the physical shape expressed by the body is more than evocative of its metaphysical associations. It instead expresses or calls such metaphysical elements into being.

The right unifying narrative or concept to frame experience is defined as the one that most resonates with as many aspects of the self and its world as possible. It can transform both the practice, and the self that practises (McHose and Frank 2006: 48). Such narratives can include: the perceived need for disciplined submission to the evolution of a future perfected self, as with Veronika and Tanya; an evolving map of the somatic and esoteric self conditioned by ‘elemental qualia’ and ‘porous to its ecology’, as with Uma and Christopher; and the invocation of supernatural qualities through a shamanic connection to supernatural beings, as with Sivani Mata and Nicole. All of my case studies contain multiple overlapping stories of the living self-world, including each other’s to varying extents.

Many of the conceptual maps of the self-world common to contemporary yoga come from disparate sources within South Asian traditions. These commonly include: Ayurvedic *doṣas* (Langford 2004: 4); Tantric *tattvas* (universal categories of energy and matter) (Mallinson and Singleton 2017: xix); Upanishadic *kośas* (layers of the self) (Mallinson and Singleton 2017: 184); and more modern, New Age interpretations of the *cakras* (energy nodes within the body) (Singleton 2010: 32). Detailing all the many ways that they have been adapted and transformed even within this subculture would be a worthwhile thesis in itself. But the use of multiple, even seemingly incompatible and unthinkingly overlaid maps of energetic and biomedical bodies onto individualised territories of lived experience serves a common function. When multiple maps can be made to interface with each other, they increase the possible field of ‘routes’ and ‘destinations’ within practice intentions.

This is clearest in Veronika’s practice, in which she uses the Anapana meditation as a practice of breath awareness to connect in turn to bodily awareness, to immediately decide the direction of travel of the subsequent physical *āsana*, the detail of which will be determined by the framework of Reflex Yoga. Over time,

“your observations go from being just what's on the surface or what's gross or obviously sensation down to the much subtler things that are happening” – Veronika

This phenomenological inquiry provides knowledge of the living self-world, the ideal self that may well be filtered through cultural expectations, and the possible routes between them. As a result, the long-term practitioner opens to what Veronika calls the experiential “universe inside you”. And the use of infinite metaphors to describe the lived experience of the inner self is widespread. It may reflect the ever-multiplying possible experiences of the inner body. In contrast, it may be that the indistinct nature of the interoceptive sensory landscape compared with the more finite sensations of external sensations on the skin, naturally recalls the infinite and numinous (Remski 2015d).

The most common long-term result of this kind of practice, as in Veronika's case, is often described as increased equanimity. But each practice, whether led or self-determined, is partly functional, partly diagnostic, partly expressive, and in most cases at least partly soteriological. And the multiple possible destinations of contemporary yoga, from healing trauma to gaining material abundance and inching towards enlightenment, are reached by multiple possible routes through the somatic inner landscape. Any long-term post-lineage practitioner is expected to alter their route by adapting practice, and change the destination, by innovating new intentions.

Whilst expanding the field of both possible destinations and routes, the practitioner's constant compass in that task is breath, and the *viveka* or discernment of options and responses that it enables. Thus, intent and response are connected during practice. The maps of meaning that result from this practice are as contextual as they are immanent. They are inspired by, and contribute in turn to, the most common roadmaps of intent and action within wider subcultural transmission. Just as it can be useful to think of religioning as a process rather than religion as an entity (Nye 2000), so considering mapping as a contingent and dynamic process is more useful to understanding post-lineage yoga than the multiple maps of its source material.

### Practice repertoires as remedies

The second stage of the practice, the remedy, is dependent on an existing repertoire of shapes, textures and qualities that practitioners aim to re-embody, somatically map, and individualise from the subcultural repertoire. As I demonstrated in the last chapter, repeated practice with those elements creates experiential mnemonics to return to, and thus re-orders lived experience according to the repertoire. Mapping practice and mapping the lived self



includes both conforming to pre-existing norms and individualising innovation. The pre-existing repertoire and the process of dynamic self-audit re-pattern each other in turn.

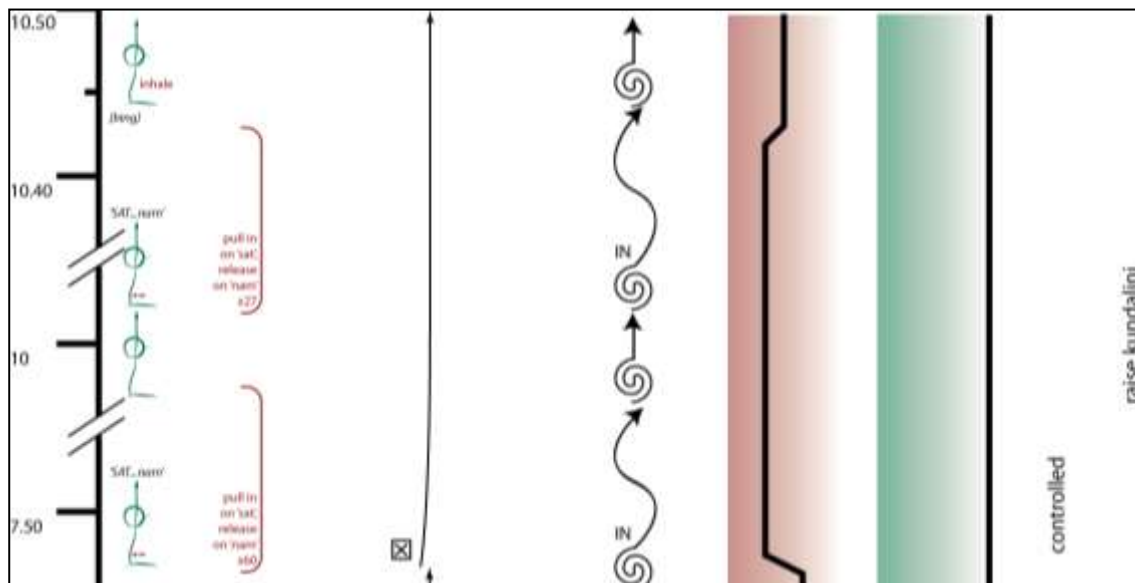


Fig. 70a. Case study 5: Practicing discipline



Fig. 70b. Case study 5: Practicing discipline

Common connections can thus be found between movement and intention, and the most commonly resonant connections will usually be the most widely and successfully transmitted. These broadly conform to Lakoff and Johnson's findings in that they enact the physicality embedded in abstract metaphor (1999: 45-50). Thus 'nourishing' practices entail less effort. 'Devotion' is demonstrated with prostration. 'Discipline' is practised through holds, repetitions and muscular engagement, as in Tanya's *kriyā* (fig. 70, above). 'Freedom' and 'liberation' are experienced through mobility, as in Nicole's deepening backbend (fig. 71, over page). Further study might find that these correspond to the emerging evidence of neurobiology concerning the distribution of affect in the body (Nummenmaa et al. 2014).

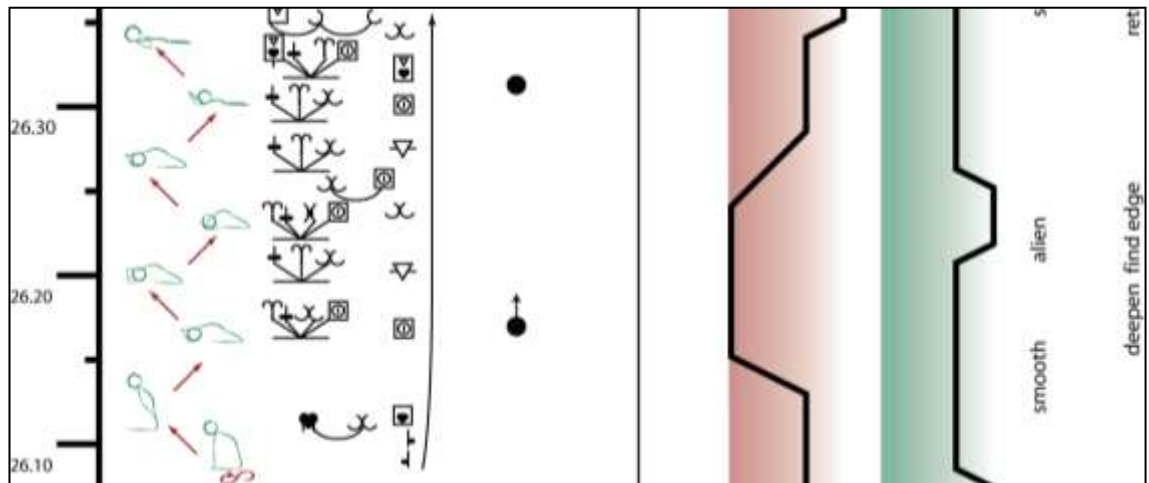


Fig. 71a. Case study 6: Exploring freedom



Fig. 71b. Case study 6: Exploring freedom

But how far the detailed correspondences of affect and gesture are innate or learnt, universal or diverse, is thus far impossible to say. Through innovation one person's gesture of communion can become another person's gesture of surrender. Finding ways to map sites of meaning and gestures of resistance, strength and openness within the individual body is in itself a lifelong goal of each practitioner.

Intent, experience and expectation prime the body's somatic field and the resulting experience is framed and bracketed by pre-existing meanings. The very gestalt of possible meanings, expectations and intents that can be made is also formed from a lifetime of individual experience. Cultural narratives become solidified into the lived experience of the body in diverse ways (Bourdieu 1990: 68–69 in Lizardo 2004: 389). But in mindful and self-empowered movement practices such as post-lineage yoga, those hidden processes of enculturation are made visible in a way that makes disruption arguably more possible.

The concept of repertoire I am using here implies a more self-conscious process to set alongside the more stable nature of Bourdieu's habitus. It describes an evolving and self-empowered toolkit rather than a set of cultural givens. In many cases a resistance to habitus is a conscious intention of the post-lineage repertoire. I will return to how effective this might be. But among many others in the subculture, Christopher in particular practises with the overt intention to re-awaken the bodily universe in response to sensorimotor amnesia: the partial and uneven loss of bodily sensation and movement through trauma or disuse induced by contemporary living (Fraleigh 2000; Da'oud 1995: 349).

The intention of the early part of individual practice is to sensitise the lived body to both its habitus and the lived ecology of practice with an existing repertoire of tools before it can approach the spontaneity or communion hopefully discovered in the later moments of practice. In the long term, the nervous system is subject to increasing levels of refinement, and the motor capacities of the body are both differentiated and unified. Globally, the movement of the body becomes both more specific and thus precise, and also more coherent and thus graceful. Through the repertoire of remedy the practitioner seeks to return to a body that is steady, enjoyable and graceful (Cole and Montero 2007: 303), compliant to its own will yet also self-responsive to its needs. This awakened body can better discern the next step to the ideal self, can better surrender to the currents of pre-verbal experience, and can better navigate the sympathetic resonances in the fields of *prāṇa* and *Kuṇḍalinī*.

Yet the very idea of repertoire and practitioner elides a further porosity of self to process. The lived self is not enacted *on* but *by* the practice. The momentary experience of awakened, unified self-hood in resistance to its habits or connected to the divine *is both the self and the practice*: a living sum of audit tools and repertoire, a landscape of somatic affect and gestures of expression that create the self that is expressed in the language of movement (Sheets-Johnstone 2010). As Cope describes it:

In yoga it is understood that the experience of the abiding self is not so much discovered as it is created, moment to moment, in a field that is properly evocative, sustaining, and responsive (1999: 137)

Thus each practitioner and practice balances achieving with experiencing (Haugen 2016: 79), giving weight to each dependent on their personal tendencies. Those seeking structural change strive for achievement. Those exploring phenomenological experience prize sensation. Aligned with that orientation is a correlating preference for either external action or an internal homeostasis that is experienced as equanimity. Each action, however, increases

homeostasis. And increased homeostasis makes action easier to perform. The resulting flow in each practice between action and homeostasis is visible in movement patterns.

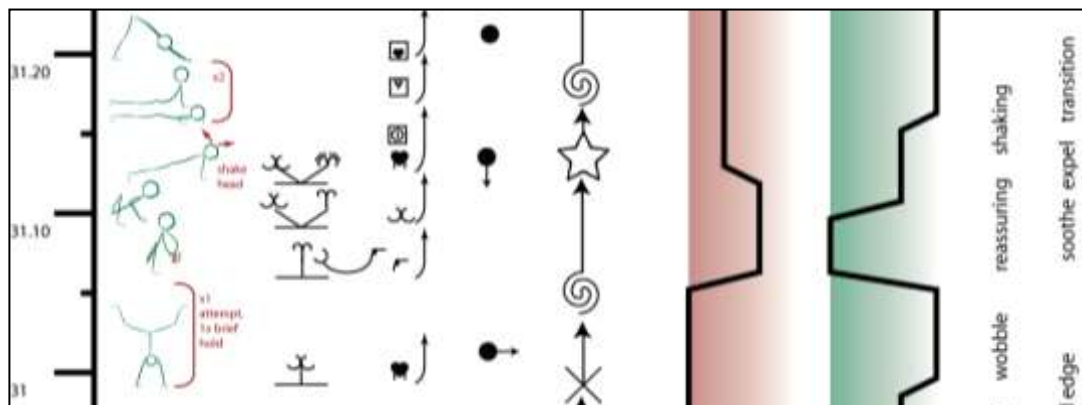


Fig. 72. Case study 2: Pausing to audit and reset

In fig. 72, above, we can see the clear shapes of hand balances that Christopher uses to affect his intended action of strengthening the wrists. Between them are pauses to audit the results at 31.05, as well as shaking patterns at 31.15, which are commonly used in movement practices to reset the nervous system. Meanwhile Uma's practice (fig. 73) has a much stronger intention to experience homeostasis. It thus consists almost entirely of contemplative practices to audit and savour the self, together with emergent, wriggling and shaking movements that soothe the nervous system. Yet Uma's practice still involves smaller intentions to address perceived imbalances in the body. The remedies for these imbalances are shown by the chest-opening, long-held pose at 37 minutes, and the elbow-freeing stretches that follow it.

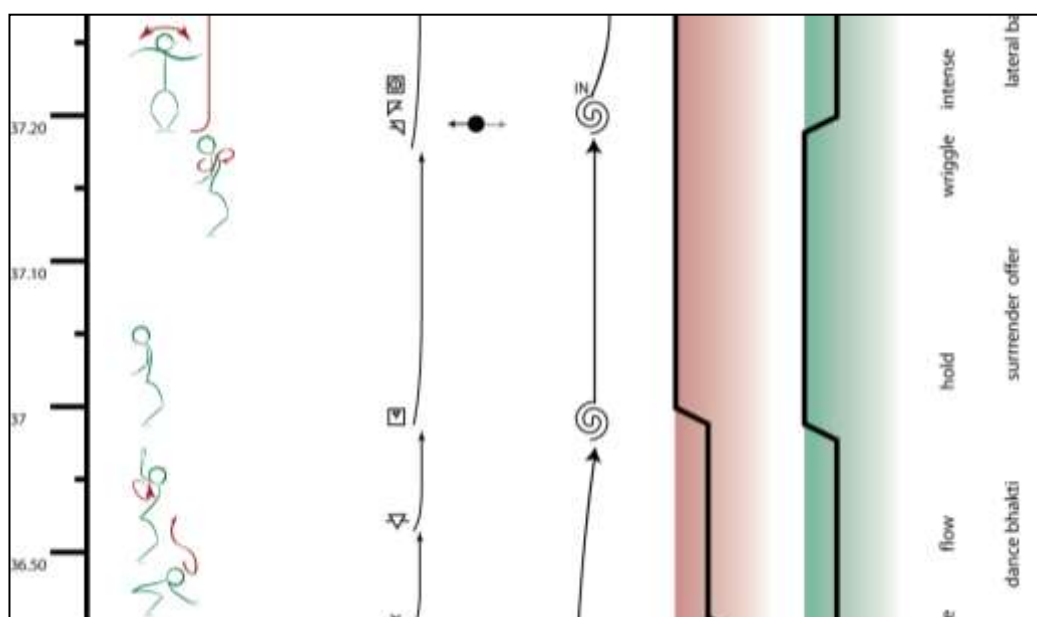


Fig. 73. Case study 3: Opening the chest, freeing the elbows

It is instructive here to separate out the choreographed action towards predetermined intent from the emergent expression of homeostasis in each practice. But these are two poles of a continuum that echoes Uma's description of the necessary balance between *tapas* and *saṃtoṣa* as effort and ease. Whilst a practitioner-in-practice might tend to one pole or the other, each practice emerges in the dance between them, and both intend a change of some kind in lived experience. Practice changes the practitioner in practice. But practice is productive of the meanings, as well as the selves it expresses. For example, esoteric *cakras* are known to exist because they are a map of the body that correlates to the somatic experience of practice. Yet they are also installed through practice, called into being through repeated invocations of movement, sensation and meaning (Mallinson and Singleton 2017: 171). Post-lineage yoga is a highly **semio-genetic**, or meaning-making activity, in which many aspects of personhood are strongly invested. It is a self-aware example of what LaMothe (2008: 583) calls "a rhythm of bodily becoming". Through this practice-as-repertoire, inside this fluid self-world, the self is a product and a process. The locus of intentionality, the self as bodily voice, is equally mobile.

In reality, there can be no self that pre-exists bodily experience. The proper term for the act and state of being-in-the-world, as Maxine Sheets-Johnstone reminds us (2009: 375), is not embodiment, but animation. Personhood is not installed in the body, but arises from the in-dwelling world as a physical locus of concepts, memories and processes (Ingold 2011: 11). Each of us arises from a field of sensation and movement that holds us enmeshed in our animate relations with the world that births us (Harvey 2006: 27; LaMothe 2015: 107). We are, indeed, inseparable from it, our porous borders continually reshaped by the relationships of consent, affect and action that connect us to others.

### Savouring innovation and self-expression

For the practitioners in my case study, a lived experience of the emplaced, animate, evolving self described above is a fundamental result of the practice. It commonly arrives in the savour portion of the practice, and it arrives wordlessly. It is not the fruit of the so-called primary senses of sight, sound, taste and smell, as if they were discrete organs that seek to penetrate the world and return with impressions to be catalogued within the tidy corridors of the brain. Nor is it the result of reaching out to touch and change the world around them, or themselves to the world, ever-seeking Merleau-Ponty's 'maximal grip' (Dreyfus 1996: 41). Instead, the implicit knowledge of one's place as an ever-arising, ever-connected, ever-ripening fruit of the world comes from those oft-forgotten processes at the heart of all experience: kinesthesia and somaesthesia, in other words in the sensations of external and internal movement.

Regardless of the functional intentions to movement, post-lineage yoga overflows with an expressive surplus to functionality evident in both the innovate and savour parts of the practice cycle. This is maximal expression rather than maximal grip. Within the case studies, the most ecstatic practices are arguably the most graceful and otherworldly to watch, and the least consciously planned. As exemplified in fig. 74, Sivani Mata and Nicole in particular are adept at using the most internal of impulses to shape the most innovative flowing movements:

“then [I] feel into the fronts of the feet, I automatically feel the ripple and move from that ripple then I push through my hands and that ripples me the other way” – Sivani Mata

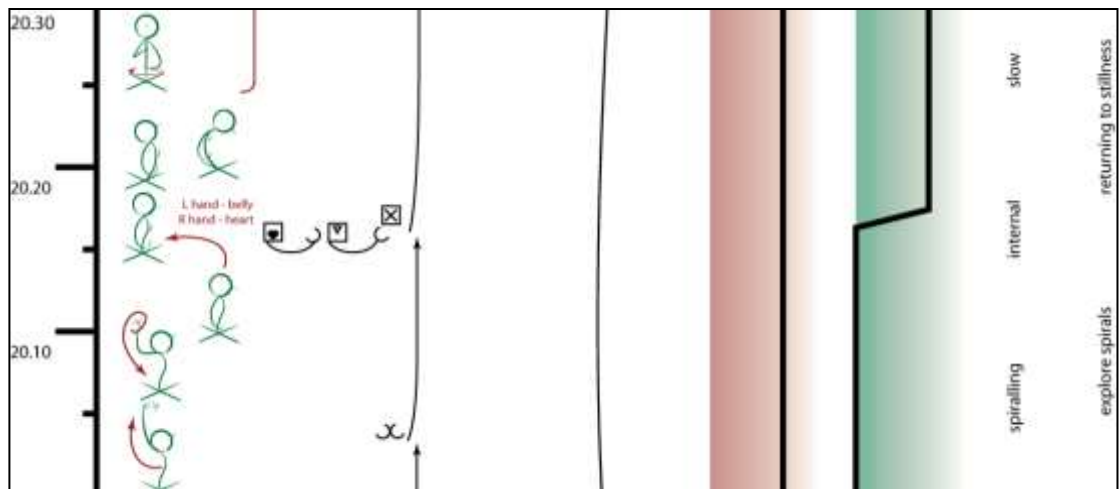


Fig. 74a. Case study 4: Emergent movement



Fig. 74b. Case study 4: Emergent movement

If we consider the practice cycle on a qualitative rather than instrumental basis, every practice still builds from preparation to exploration, often involving a number of peak, innovative moments that subsequent moments seek to savour. Whilst this echoes the arc of such ecstatic communions as the raves (Takahashi 2004: 155), dance and *bhakti* that are also strong influences within the post-lineage camp environment, the practice experience is less of a

simple rise to peak then drop. It can be imagined as more of an octave of enchantment and intensity to be explored, both in group and individual practice.

Trance experiences are not the sole reward for practice here. Long term practice can be as qualitatively mundane as it is ecstatic (Barsalou et al. 2005: 46). Reaching for peak experiences multiple times a week over many years is commonly held by these practitioners to be unsustainable. But each practice, and each interview, turned at some point to various experiences of liminality. Sivani Mata's practice sustains multiple layers of self-world in a healing oasis that restores self and world as one. The practice space is, in part, a re-enchantment of the sacred but mundane spaces of daily living (Holloway 2003: 1961), in which practitioners remember that "we are at home and our relations are all around us" (Harvey 2006: 212). There is an experiential rightness to the practitioner-in-practice during the savour stage of practice that reflects resonant relationship with one's surroundings.

## Conclusion

The distinction between sacred and mundane, commonly made within the subculture, is both more complex and less dualist than it first appears. Among the many theological interpretations in this specific post-lineage subculture are diverse but common conceptions of remaking or recognising the bodily self as holy and invested with a spiritual, original self. This pristine self is sometimes described as separate from matter, but at other times, described as somatically silenced within matter. This deadening of the 'true' self is attributed to either the inevitable traumas of living or the dehumanising effect of contemporary culture. The 'world' of Nicole's case study title refers to a mundane experience of the everyday, and 'spirit' refers to an experience *of that same world* as enchanted and pristine. Thus, a practitioner who can walk in both is able to perform necessary everyday tasks *at the same time* as maintaining awareness of the miracle of existence: holistically united in experience.

In listening to practitioners talk, there is a strong sense of an intimate and sacred heart to identity. It arises in a process of self-divination within the oasis of practice just as, for some, the processes of cleansing and nourishment allow the *mūrti* to come into being. This self is named and called into being in a physical ritual of honouring, emplaced among an ecology filled with other *mūrtis*. Each *mūrti* is an incarnated, created version of something more universal, more abstract, more unified and perfected than the flawed incarnation that has survived to enter the practice. Within this enchanted space, the human practitioner is more than human. It embodies as many evolutionary and developmental forms as it can dream of, and every divine

name it sings. It can be, depending on intent, both theomorphic and biomorphic (Da'oud 1997: 61).

The *siddhis* (supernatural rewards) of pre-modern yoga involved besting enemies and eliminating the restrictions of the mundane world (Mallinson and Singleton 2017: 361). When contemporary post-lineage yoga seeks the extraordinary, it dreams of creating a hyper-natural self that can maintain coherence from moment to moment and still experience the divine in all things, within a multiplicity of over-laid worlds. And while in early parts of the cycle, elements of practice are chosen as the cause of change and the cause of awakening, during both innovate and savour sections, the practice elements that emerge are the result of that change.

Thus individual practice is an “intimate microcosmic self-sacrificial act” as Joseph Alter describes it, in which “self, sacrifice, sacrificer, sacrificer and the ultimate object of the sacrifice all become the same thing” (2012: 426), although my results clearly show that the long-term practitioners and teachers of post-lineage yoga have far more than the superficial apprehension of this process Alter goes on to describe. The often-incommunicable state of enchantment reached in the savour part of the practice cycle is a significant result even and perhaps especially when it is not a prior intention, but an unexpected gift.

It becomes clear therefore that the ‘inner self’ that post-lineage practitioners refer to as the ultimate authority when choosing between the near-infinite options of possible practice elements, is in fact also the fuel, ground and eventual outcome of the practice. The relationship between the self that audits and the self that is audited, or the self that chooses and the self that is savoured, is an evolving mystery. The shift in authority that post-lineage yoga represents: from a single and clear hierarchy of knowledge to a fluid negotiation between the internal, external and relational, is further complicated by this practice cycle and its iterative evolution of the self and other as a lived landscape with porous boundaries. In the next chapter, I will outline the possible rewards of such a complex, fluid practice, for a practitioner who might be only partly aware of the processes involved.





## 8. Levels of engagement in post-lineage practice

In Chapter 7 I described the spiralling practice cycle of audit, remedy, innovate and savour at the heart of each individual journey through post-lineage practice. I also drew from my case studies a number of changes practitioners might reach for: approaching an external ideal, increasing somatic sensitivity, and resonating with sympathetic magic, within a self that is extremely changeable, and porous to its ecology. With this in mind, what do post-lineage practitioners feel they gain through practice, and how is this related to their engagement in both the practice, and the subculture?

Put simply, a casual attendee may have a much less reflexive attitude to post-lineage yoga than someone who has dedicated many years to running a post-lineage yoga event. But whilst individual and group practice are the two pillars that support the evolution of post-lineage yoga as a subculture, their actual interrelation will vary from person to person. With those caveats in mind, a defining feature of my research design was the realisation that long-term teacher-practitioners would have useful insights into the practice. Whilst at these subcultural events such practitioners are usually in the majority, they necessarily come into contact with those having rather different aims and experiences. By mapping the interpersonal relationships discovered in my fieldwork, I was able to form the following snapshot of a community that is ever in flux, from post-lineage beginners to committed teacher-practitioners, to organisers and activists. In Chapter 11, I will return to consider how such interpersonal connections sustain the overall coherence of this post-lineage subculture.

### Visualising the connections sustaining post-lineage peer networks

Visualising the connections that hold together the specific community at the heart of this thesis enabled a better understanding of the dynamic processes at work (Caldarelli and Catanzaro 2012: 6). To do so, I created a number of network graphs. I am using the term 'network' here to describe the flows of information and interpersonal affinity that sustain this part-time but long-term community. The subculture has long-lasting ties and an evolving history, and regular but intermittent proximity, sustained by more frequent personal communication and promotional messaging online. The personal narratives and community

solidarity that Wittel argues are absent from such network sociality (2001: 51-2) are in fact commonly shared in this post-lineage network. This is not a bureaucratic database, but an informal flock, and not a managed hierarchy, but a loose network of friendships and working collaborations (Wittel 2001: 69; Lionel and Le Grange 2011: 745). As I explained in Chapter 3, my diagrams do not comprise a complete picture of all possible inter-relationships in the subculture, but a number of useful conclusions can still be drawn using a few of them for illustration.

As Joost van Loon writes, “Networks problematize boundaries and centrality but intensify our ability to think in terms of flows and simultaneity” (2006: 307). The charisma developed through post-lineage community interactions and shared narratives flows through and shapes its networks. But because these networks function with multiple points of feedback and reflection, they multiply the numbers involved in subcultural creation, preferencing collective processes of learning and evolution (van Loon 2006: 309). In the post-lineage camp ecology, where practice is shared by multiple bodies with multiple other bodies, the subculture evolves in a real time example of a gift economy, or more accurately, as I showed in Chapter 5, a *sevā* economy (Carrier 1991: 124). Fig. 75 (over page) demonstrates how key figures in the network can be determined from their number of significant engagements with others (Adams 2013: 326).

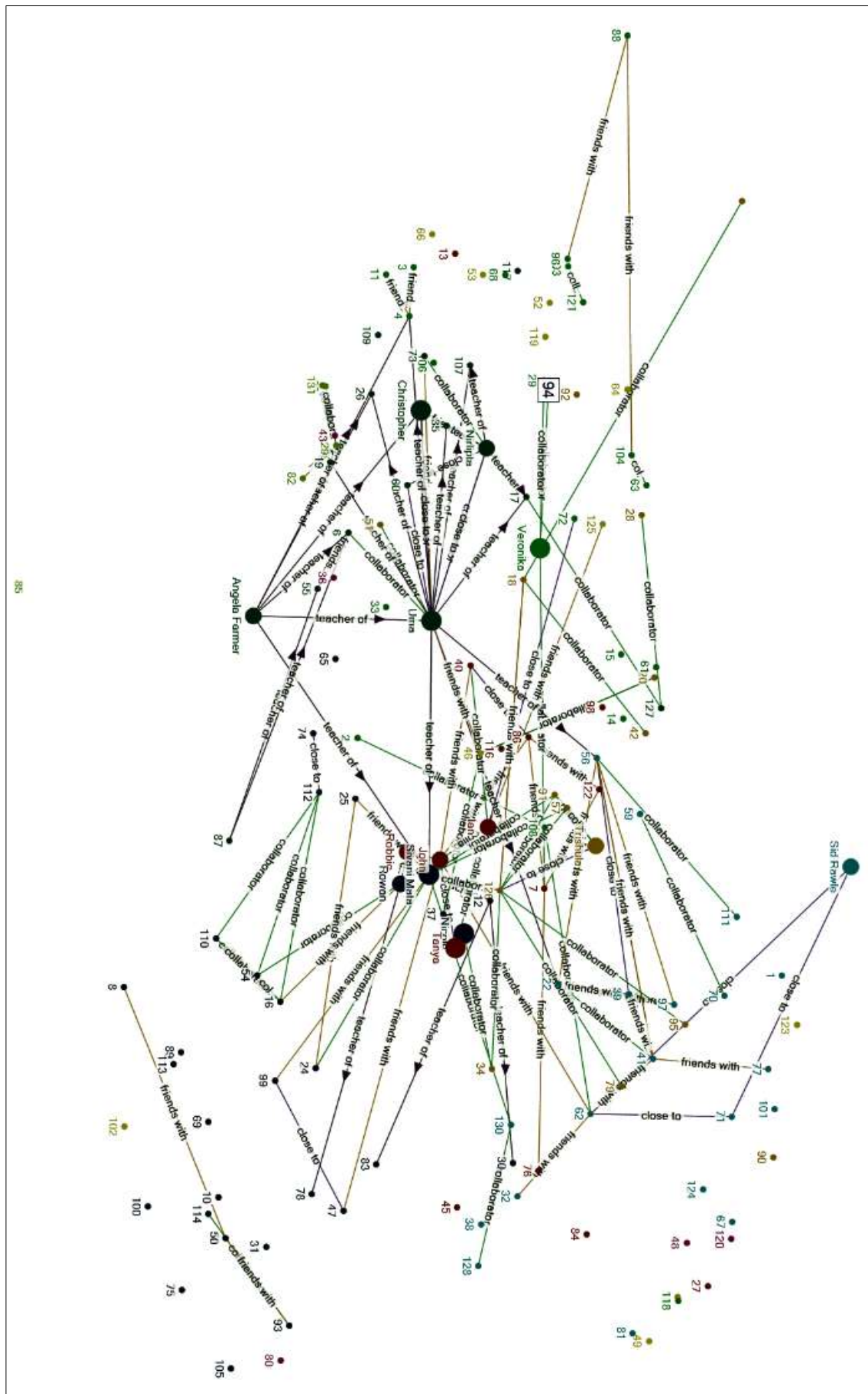


Fig. 75. Networks: Key figures

Taking one example extracted from that data, and adding in affiliations to groups, in fig. 76 can be seen the diversity of connections held by Uma and her partner Nirlipta alone. The resulting social capital is used to sustain and evolve Santosa year by year (Caldarelli and Catanzaro 2012: 31).

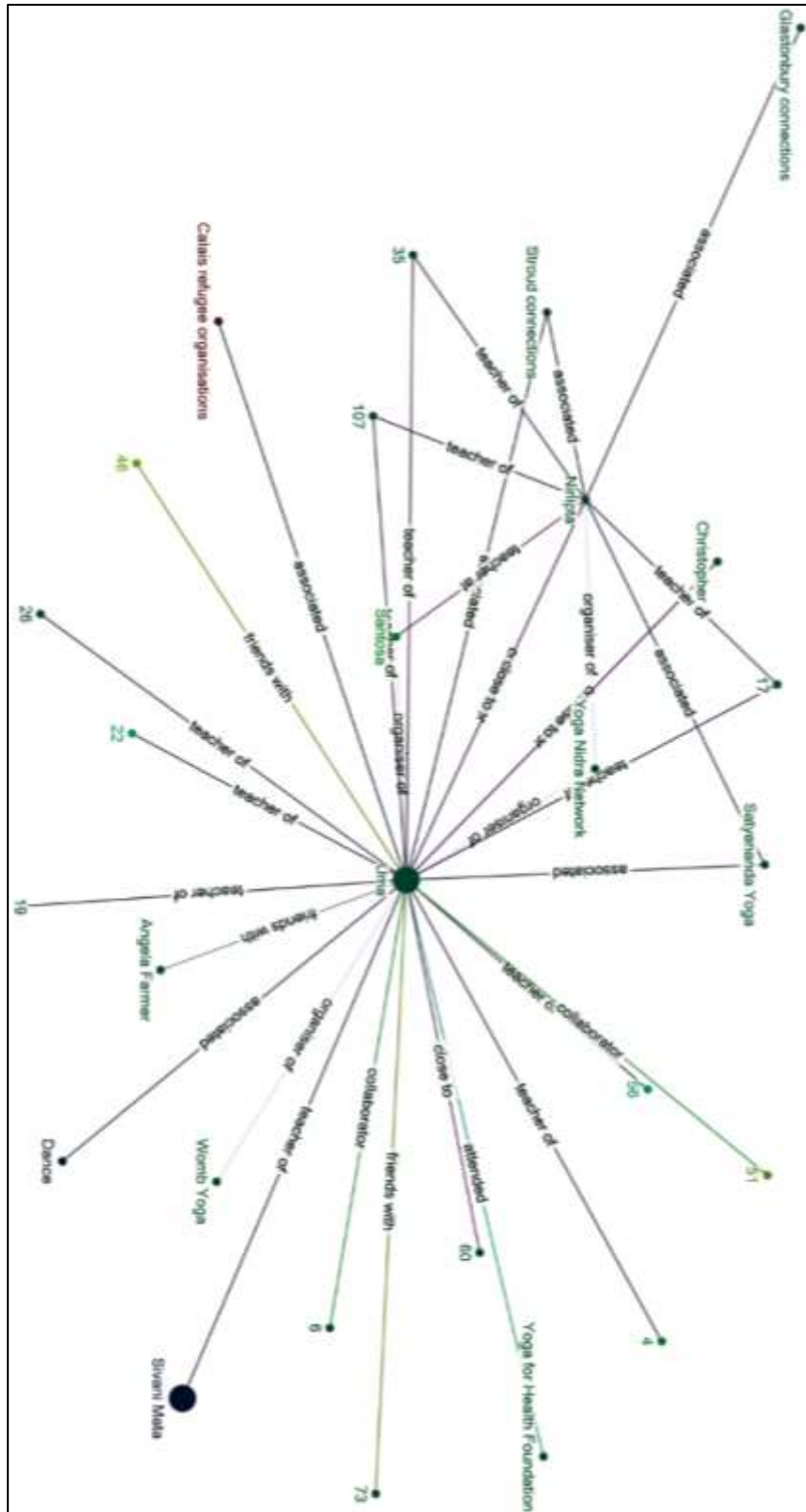


Fig. 76. Networks: Uma and Nirlipta's alliances

Networks that rely on a few central members for the most connections are most common, but less resilient than those in which connections, and thus communications, are more evenly distributed (Caldarelli and Catanzaro 2012: 97). But networks that involve more democratically or randomly distributed connections need multiple members to agree to cultural changes, making them slower to transform and adapt. Among the most resilient networks are those in which a small number of figures hold multiple connections with each other, and a much larger number of connections to the wider population in the network (Caldarelli and Catanzaro 2012: 55). The formation of smaller more connected networks that sit within and sustain larger, more disparate networks is consistent with the various levels of engagement in post-lineage subcultures. In network theory terms, the charisma that helps to attract a larger number of more superficial connections to a few central figures with deeper connections to each other, can be understood as a measure of what is known as preferential attachment (Caldarelli and Catanzaro 2012: 71).

The shifting membership of the Babaji Temple Singers (fig. 77, over page), functions as another such network in miniature. Unlike many lineage communities, their connections are as commonly made to those outside their lineage as within it. As a result of this willingness to connect, multiple members will perform *bhakti* or *sevā* at many post-lineage events, but they do not rely on every member being present to be able to serve.

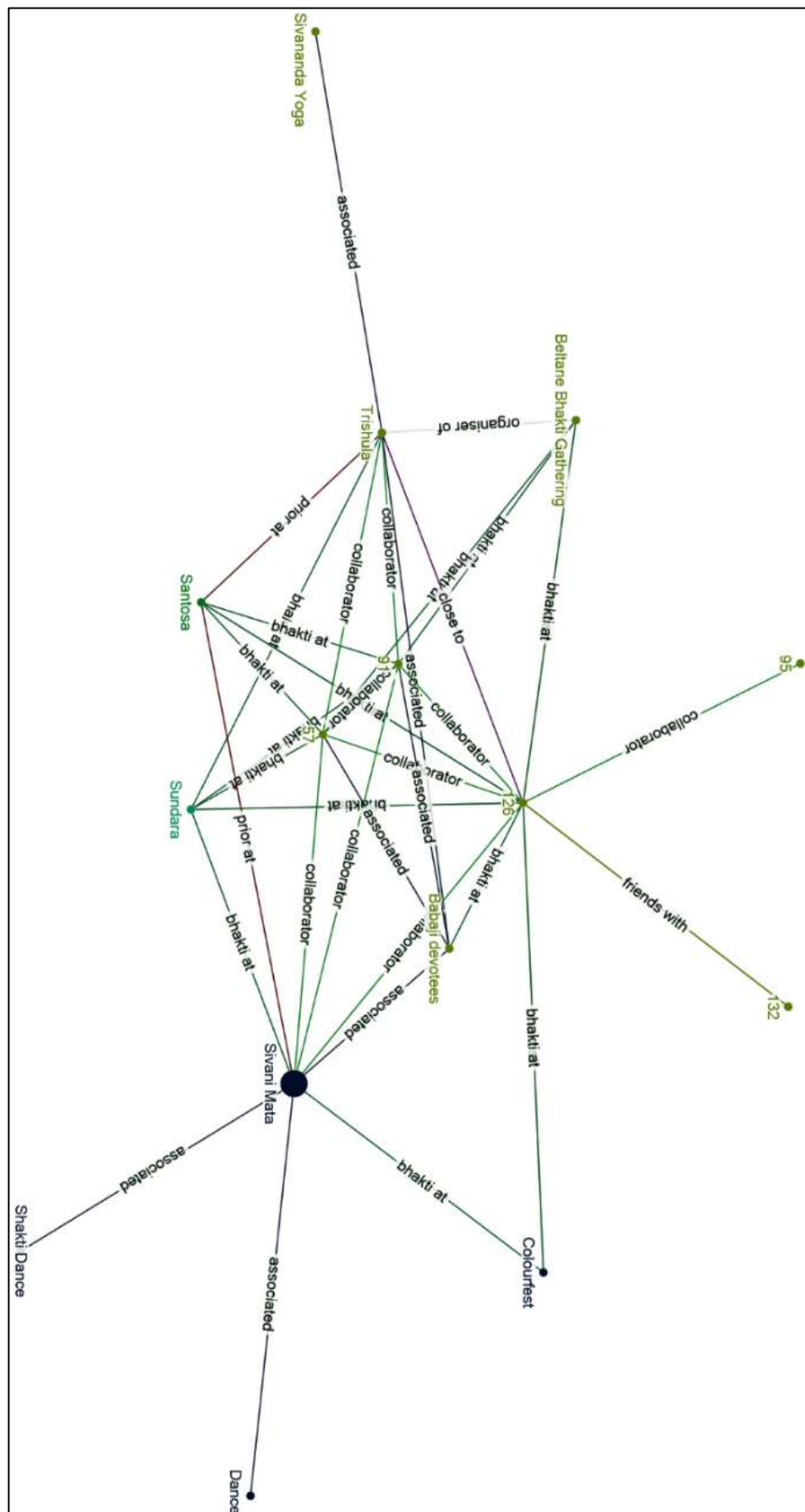


Fig. 77. Networks: The Babaji Temple Singers

Finally, fig. 78 (over page) gives some sense of the complexity of affiliations that influence the diversity of post-lineage subcultures. From Babaji devotees to Calais refugee organisations, and from Special Needs Yoga to Shakti Dance, each of the affiliations grouped here adds their own flavour as they add practice elements to camp activities and subcultural norms. As membership in this community evolves, so too does subcultural practice. A significant body of network theory suggests that this evolution is at the very least constrained by, if not wholly incompatible with the kinds of managerial standardisation and hierarchical organisation typical of brand and lineage knowledge production, which aim to preserve and propagate rather than evolve and diversify practice (van Loon 2006: 313). It is no coincidence that one of the most resistant subcultures to standardisation in contemporary yoga sustains rapid evolution and high levels of diversity. It is also one of the most resistant to commercialisation. Commercial entities from clothing companies to marketing applications are evidence of what van Loon describes as network parasites, undermining the integrity of the rhizomatic post-lineage subculture (van Loon 2006: 313). A rhizomatic view of learning processes emphasises a multiplicity of connections between holders and receivers of knowledge, rather than one-way transmission through a hierarchy of teachers and students (Lionel and Le Grange 2011: 746).



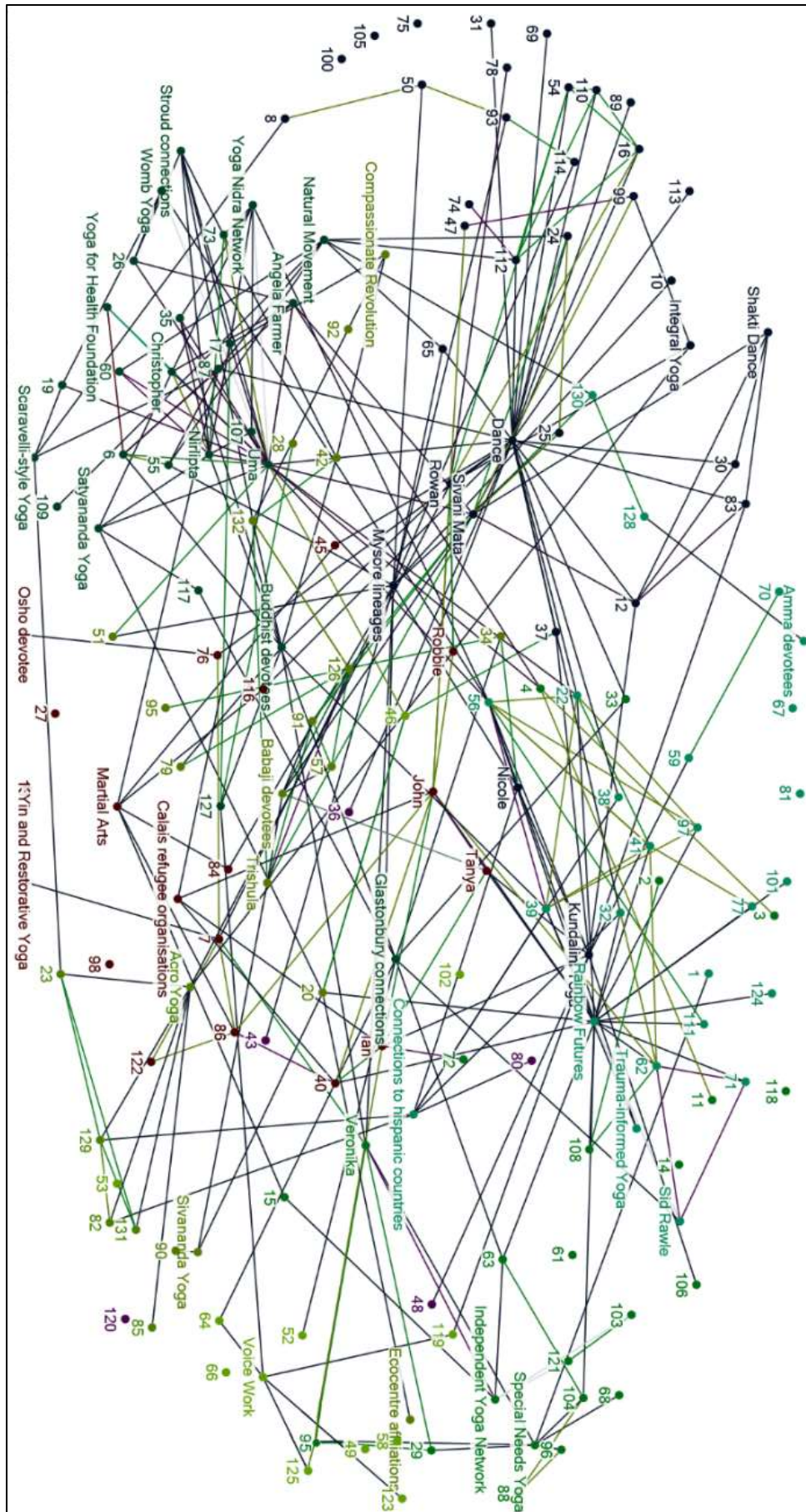


Fig. 78. Networks: All affiliations

All the above graphs served to enhance and refine my understanding of the flows of influence in this informal community. Even though I began with the hypothesis that this was a highly interconnected community, the visible complexity of network connections was surprising. But the graphs above only detail the connections between a subset of the teachers, *bhakti* musicians, organisers, volunteers and other key figures at the heart of post-lineage culture. This is largely representative of the community that sustains and evolves the culture, and the main focus of this thesis. It is important to remember that although this is a participative subculture, these events are also targeted at a population of less engaged members, who attend the events, partake of their offerings, and to an extent, contribute the largest financial support (Jenkins and Carpentier 2013: 271). Thus, organisers must balance offerings that will benefit the community, with offerings that have wider appeal. But even drawing a boundary around that subculture at its widest and most diffuse, I estimate that at least eighty percent of people engaging in this post-lineage subculture are yoga teachers.

In one session of Japa Yoga (chanting practice) at Colourfest, the teacher mentions how pop versions of the Gāyatrī Mantra, such as the one by Deva Premal that inspired at least one television soundtrack (Glendening 2012), lack the “power” of more traditional versions but serve to “draw people in” to a deeper consideration of the possibilities of chanting as a practice. The view that there are levels of engagement with yoga that one moves through, charmed by more accessible offerings into a more profound involvement, is commonly held. Its hopeful pragmatism complicates any easy separation between commercial and non-commercial methods of transmission in contemporary yoga. Indeed, it is a great mistake to assume that any teacher’s knowledge of yoga practice is only as extensive as their teaching output. In the conversations happening in post-lineage communities, yoga teachers commonly discuss the problem of how to engage the most casual of practitioners in a wider diversity of offerings beyond the culturally accessible format of *sūrya namaskāra*, stretching, breathing and relaxation.

## Coming to post-lineage yoga for the first time

Significant numbers of people attend the events profiled in my fieldwork as part of a first introduction to post-lineage yoga. The vast majority of these are, again, already yoga teachers, looking for a sense of coherent community lacking in their everyday experiences of yoga. The structure of many yoga teacher trainings involves little post-graduation support, and the large number of graduates and an often competitive market can leave teachers feeling very isolated (Goldberg 2015; Hargreaves 2018b). Such teachers might be drawn to exploring such communal post-lineage yoga environments for a number of reasons. Most commonly they

seek support for dealing with more negative experiences in other yoga spaces, or seek newer resources to develop their personal and teaching practice. A few are merely curious to see what a more mixed community of practitioners has to offer. For all of these, the most predictable rewards of the camps are increased solidarity, new friendships and some refreshing of their practice repertoires. It is only when those teachers share practice at communal events on a more frequent basis that their own repertoire is most likely to influence the shared subculture in return.

The place of these events within a wider network of camps and small festivals in Britain also attracts a few people whose previous engagement with yoga is minimal. Post-lineage yoga in those cases is an experiment in experience among many others. As one yoga teacher said at the Beltane Bhakti Gathering:

“[People] come to a yoga class, they're completely frazzled. They leave feeling more balanced, so everybody they come into contact with is going to benefit.”

Without an established, self-reflexive practice of some kind however, the group sessions that might provoke a first exploration of individual post-lineage practice are more confusing to navigate. Making a choice between subcultural activities is more difficult when an attendee does not share the subcultural reference points of, for example, ‘masculine’ versus ‘feminine’ styles of movement, or the object and intent of *bhakti* activities, and there is always the risk of not knowing one’s body well enough to make individually appropriate decisions.

Post-lineage yoga, its adherents agree, is a product of regular individual practice, and a significant level of reflexivity. This level of commitment is of a different order than that of the casual practitioner who might attend a yoga class once a week, and of a different kind than the devoted practitioner aiming to faithfully reproduce modern postural yoga at home. The intuition involved in finding a personalised practice appropriate to the evolving nature of one’s lived experience, day after day, year after year, is vital for the committed post-lineage practitioner. This is because despite the inclusive and democratic tendencies of post-lineage yoga, as I will show in the next chapter, the history, and thus many of the enduring protocols of yoga transmission, involve aligning to external ideals for posture and movement. Almost all yoga students first learn a practice by rote before ever learning how to choose between practice elements. In post-lineage practice these elements prescribed by external authority are ideally, as I have explained, confirmed with the authority of the inner self, and are tested against group norms. But while the beginner to *yoga* might be acquiring new habits of movement, the transition from modern postural to *post-lineage* yoga is as likely to involve breaking existing movement habits as forming new ones.

All of the established post-lineage practitioners I spoke to had begun their journey into the practice by in some way breaking out or moving beyond more authoritarian yoga schools. Indeed, one apocryphal story of the subculture recounts how after leaving Iyengar Yoga, the well-respected divine feminine yoga teacher Angela Farmer ran ‘Teacher Un-training Courses’ for many years. Despite this all of my case studies have repertoires that include at least as many movements learned by rote through lineage as those intuited and shared through peer networks. Below, for example, are very similar *vinyāsa* variations from the Mysore lineages in Veronika, Tanya and Christopher’s practice repertoires, in Case Studies 1, 5 and 2 (fig. 79).

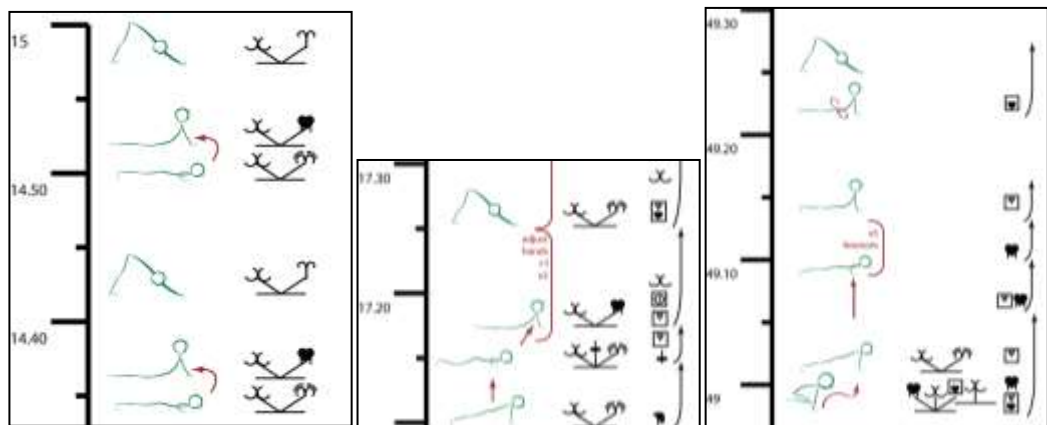


Fig. 79a. Case studies 1, 2 and 5: *Vinyāsa* variations



Fig. 79b. Case studies 1, 2 and 5: *Vinyāsa* variations

Most of the post-lineage yoga teachers I met, although not all, moved on from a lineage or brand as a response to some sort of injurious or abusive behaviour by a more senior teacher. Either such practitioners had been affected personally, or they had been made aware of unethical behaviours by senior teachers towards other practitioners, or they had become aware that the method they were taught was nowhere near as universally beneficial as they had been told. As a result, one of the most common initial drives behind the significant commitment to the reflexive, self-led practice that is key to post-lineage yoga, is reflecting on

some form of adverse experience with modern postural yoga. As I explained in Chapter 1, this is often complicated by the other adverse life experiences that the practitioner seeks to manage or heal through individual practice: the ongoing effects of everything from childhood trauma to torn ligaments; from prostrate problems to bereavement. Such practitioners can remake the self through a crucible of experience that distils personal and spiritual rewards from any experience (Robertson and Wildcroft 2017: 98).

Thus, although today the subculture under consideration also includes members who maintain allegiances to one of the more open yoga lineages, engaging in what we might call a kind of intra-yoga interfaith, at the heart of post-lineage impetus to practice, is a transformation of diverse and often mundane forms of suffering. And this holds true for many of those more casual attendees of the camps, who will also often be attracted to post-lineage practice in the hope of healing something in their histories, including negative experiences in practice itself. It is for this reason that re-mapping the body is a common intention to practice, un-training postural habits as often as training them.

But in the process of learning to re-map the body and its history of practice, the locus of authority, and thus the location of the authentic voice of the self, can be difficult to navigate within the fluid spaces of practice (Ulland 2012: 86). The cultural stories imparted with practice have complex roots and carry currents of interpersonal power, as demonstrated by Uma's ongoing experimentation with gender dynamics in yoga in Case Study 3. From its inception, modern postural yoga has sought to improve bodies, and developed methods of conditioning to train bodies for that improvement (Alter 2006: 760). In this, it is part of a much wider, and long-established trans-cultural trend (Gilman 2014: 69; Jesson 2017).

Elizabeth Behnke (1997: 187-8) extends the work of Husserl to explore the idea of 'ghost gestures': those sedimented and internalised qualities that structure our potential future movement landscape. Movement educators often describe the missing movement ranges that each individual loses over time as a kind of sensorimotor amnesia rather than a breakdown in muscular function. Seen in this light, inherited cultural habits of movement involve blind spots equivalent to a kind of sensorimotor cognitive dissonance. This is as true of someone whose spine adjusts to support the now absent weight of a bag carried on the same shoulder for years, as it is true of someone whose body has adapted to anticipate the daily pre-dawn performance of *sūrya namaskāra* characteristic of the Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga system. Whilst a particular practitioner may decide that any such habits have become life-enhancing or life-constraining, the first task is recognising they exist. And while modern postural yoga includes various observational techniques for recognising habits formed in everyday life, individual

lineages evolve fewer techniques for recognising any *negative* aspects to habits formed within the practices they prescribe. The very point of modern postural yoga is to imprint the student body indelibly with a particular set of habits that the teaching hierarchy has found to be beneficial. And whilst dedicated post-lineage yoga practitioners have developed the skill to resist some of the dominant dynamics of modern postural yoga, the dance of effort and ease, resilience training and self-nourishment inherent to post-lineage yoga is a delicate one for beginners to navigate.

Nonetheless, camps are an opportunity for many to engage in activities outside one's comfort zone, leading to new experiences of self, and relationship, and new ways of moving through the world by experiencing temporary entrainment with others with very different lifestyles. As Uma says of Santosa:

“Maybe they're just getting tasters. But the tastes they're getting! [LC] is one of the best Sanskrit teachers in the whole country. That is her thing. And she's sitting there in a tent sharing it with people who've never done it before.”

As a result, among the curious and casual attendees, there continue to be new people willing to make a commitment to increasing reflexivity in practice, and increasing engagement with the post-lineage community as a source of both solidarity, and new practice resources.

## A troubled relationship with standardisation and commercialisation

Each subculture may have its own unique shared repertoire of practice, dependent on the influences of diverse lineages, movement practices and other cultural sources available. Cultural references from Shakti Dance, to specific *kīrtan* chants, to particular *vinyāsa* movement sequences, which are shared by the community centred in my fieldwork, will have much less relevance to other post-lineage subcultures. In the democratisation of authority to determine practice from lineage to peer networks, the consensus repertoire both encompasses more diversity, and evolves more rapidly.

Each teacher brings a unique style to their teaching. But for some teachers, their own practice repertoire eventually contains sufficient unique elements that they are teaching a coherent practice that is significantly new. This inevitably involves a certain standardisation or at least formalisation of part of their personal repertoire into general and shareable content. Such new content is often shared at subcultural events such as the camps of this thesis, in order to test and discuss it with other teachers. As yoga teaching is largely still conducted in person, they

may find themselves offering the same content repeatedly in multiple locations, for a number of years. Increasingly, they may also package the content for digital download, such as the free yoga nidras (Dinsmore-Tuli and Tuli 2018a) and courses for sale (Dinsmore-Tuli and Tuli 2018b) at the Total Yoga Nidra Network site. If teachers aim to share their unique content as teacher training in some form, most often such content will be in some way ratified by one of the various yoga accrediting bodies.

In the time taken to professionalise or gain a reputation for their shareable content, their own individual practice may have evolved to be significantly different again. The more standardised and formalised shared content becomes, the more difficult it is for it to keep pace with the teacher's ongoing development. This disconnect is increased when the content is strongly associated with the teacher's identity narrative at the point of development. A particular practice has more shared value, as seen in the last chapter, when it is associated with a powerful story of self-healing. *Yoganidrā* is the practice that cured one teacher's insomnia. Specific *kīrtan* chants reflect a period of deep devotion to a specific deity. As those teachers' lives evolve, such practices might decline in usefulness or importance for them personally. But without significant effort to disseminate new content, and associated coherent narratives, such established practice content will continue to be the focus of their professional identity, in the form of the workshops they are asked to teach, or the albums they are able to sell. A choice often emerges between accurately presenting one's current practice and identity, and performing a known and trusted version of themselves and their teachings. The more commercially successful their professional identity becomes, the less coherence there is likely to be between individual practice and the content they share. Privately, a number of my respondents shared rumours of commercially successful yoga teachers who no longer practice the forms they are famous for developing and continue to teach.

Many scholars have persuasively argued for the influence of late capitalism on transnational yoga (Broo 2012; Altglas 2014). Examples of contemporary yoga wholly consistent with neoliberal culture are easy to find (see Alexander 2016; Jordan 2015). In more recent hyper-individual and neoliberal manifestations, the yoga practitioner seeks rational control of body in the service of spiritual advancement or enlightenment, but equally in the hopes of social advancement according to their rightful place within civic society (Jain 2014a: 76). In this model, the affluent, white and urban learn to perform the authenticity of their ethnically appropriated spiritual-but-not-religious practices for the price of a studio pass bought from mostly white and urban spiritual entrepreneurs. They are active in their *consumption*, but disengaged from the *production* of these cultural and religious products. Definitions of cultural and commercial appropriation have long been debated within religious studies (Pye 1971: 83),



and are commonly discussed with reference to yoga even in practitioner-focused texts (Boccio 2012: 49). Yet as I have shown, there are significant differences between the transactions at the heart of commercially branded yoga as described above, and the relationships in which most post-lineage yoga subcultures evolve. Such differences extend to the creation, and above all marketing, of new subcultural content.

Besides the move from the universal to the particular, and from the teacher as central authority to the agency of the individual student, perhaps the most visible difference between much of modern postural yoga, and the post-lineage yoga of this thesis, is in its aesthetic aspirations. Although much yoga practice of any kind takes place in spaces that are pragmatically available, the ideal ecology of post-lineage practice differs greatly from the minimalist aesthetic of most contemporary yoga studios, which aim to separate the practice from mundane and chaotic reality (Thompson and Gates 2014: 68).



Triyoga studio, London (McKenney 2014)

In contrast, the chosen, shared environments of my fieldwork are in living relationship with participants, as seen in the beaten earth floor at Colourfest (fig. 80), created over the course of multiple movement sessions.



Fig. 80. Colourfest: Woodland floor



Post-lineage yoga, at least in this subculture, is characterised by individualisation, pragmatism, and an engagement with the world that embraces messy and even uncomfortable edges.

Camp organisers engage with the pragmatism of lived experience to differing degrees. Rowan at Colourfest wants participants to be comfortable enough to engage in the processes of discovery on offer:

“I've been to yoga festivals where it's been cold, wet, windy [...] and the capacity to grow and learn in that environment is more difficult [...]. So, we're trying to create an environment that's going to be optimum for that system to thrive” – Rowan

Whilst in the Santosa environment, Uma hopes that the process of meeting the basic needs of the physical self becomes *more* evident, encouraging self-reflection in a different way:

“You want a hot shower? There's the fire. I think it brings us back to what's absolutely real, that we have to get away from where you just have to turn the tap on.” – Uma

Their solutions may differ, but both start from the premise that lived experience is the ground of the practices they are promoting. The embedded, embodied nature of this post-lineage subculture complicates any standardisation of the practice across a diversity of possible practice ecologies.

As suggested by this difference in aesthetics, the most dominant cultural narratives of modern postural yoga involve practices packaged into universalised solutions, whose accompanying narratives promise wholeness, independence, health, and above all, an infinite, *non-relational* abundance for the deserving (Featherstone 2010: 196; Lavrence and Lozanski 2014: 80), as in this critical summary by American yoga teacher, Julian Walker: “Now, package the image with key buzzwords from this list: intention, grace, power, heart, now, present, devotion, or freedom – and your retreat, workshop or DVD ad/print article is a wrap” (Walker 2012: 2).

A reluctance to engage with such yoga marketing tropes is key to understanding the current low visibility of post-lineage subcultures within transnational yoga-related media. The ambivalence of post-lineage practitioners to engage with neoliberal narratives of wellbeing is more than political. It reflects a common unease with marketing their practice as universal solutions of packaged methods promising a life of easy abundance, when that message is so antithetical to the lived experiences that lie at the heart of developing the practices on offer. There are few easy marketing stories to tell here, and few simple products to package and sell. It is however possible for commercially successful methods to be developed through post-lineage processes, but then formalise into systems of universalised content and centralised

authority more consistent with established modern postural yoga transmission. New orthodoxies arise alongside new hierarchies of authority.

Some teachers are able to create less commercial but still commonly referenced subcultural products in the process of periodic self-reinvention. Uma Dinsmore-Tuli's published texts help to separate practices honouring the divine feminine (Dinsmore-Tuli 2013b), from Celtic-inspired practices (Dinsmore-Tuli and Harrison 2015), from practices of deep relaxation (Dinsmore-Tuli and Tuli 2018c). Whilst these are each coherent and identifiable elements within the shared repertoire of the subculture, in practice, they overlap much more in development than their separation suggests. Publishing a teacher's practice philosophy in book form might seem a counter-intuitive way to share embodied practices, but it provides the writer with the space needed to frame their narrative in a detailed and nuanced fashion. Indeed, in the course of the research, numerous teachers generously offered copies of their books to help in my research (Blackaby 2016; Blair 2017; Gladwell and Wender 2014). Such texts are rarely profitable in their own right. Most commonly, they modestly supplement incomes, and are bought by those who have already taken workshops in person with the teacher. CDs by the *bhaktiyoga* musicians present are also commonly available for sale at post-lineage events, although in the flow of *bhakti* itself, the musicians frequently forget to mention them.

Other teachers maintain control of their shared content in ways that allow for incremental evolution by peer subgroups: smaller affinity groups of practice within the greater community of practice. Uma is the co-founder of the Total Yoga Nidra Network, and Veronika co-founder of Y'otism. Both schools function more as peer networks, steadily co-evolving therapeutic applications of their field of practice with their own graduates. Each workshop, each iteration of their training manual evolves from the previous version according to ongoing feedback by graduates using the material in practice. Dissemination is largely via word of mouth.

Nonetheless, in many ways a slippage still emerges, between the practice of post-lineage yoga at the point of emerging evolution, and the practice at the point of digestion into a coherent, repeatable subcultural element, whether in the form of training manual or book, *kīrtan* chant, or newly-named method of practice.

Aside from *kīrtan* chants and *mantras*, each shared practice element is consistent with the typology of elements listed in Chapter 7. Pauses, pulsations, sequences, gestures, adjustments, breath patterns and contemplations enter the shared repertoire either as individual elements, or bundled into recognisable named methods or approaches. Such named methods are rarely brands in the conventional sense. Labels are more usually used to make styles of practice more

identifiable within the subculture, such as to signal whether a session offered on a schedule will be more challenging or less, or based on a specific ontology or epistemology. Thus, the Chi Yoga described in Chapter 5 and 9 is so-named to signal its flowing and gentle approach, and Womb Yoga to signal its adherence to divine feminine ontologies. Only the latter of those refers to a specific school of practice. There are numerous teachers combining yoga and gentle martial arts in a diversity of methods that they all call 'Chi Yoga'. Other teachers will use more generic names for their offerings on a schedule, and when asked, explain their teaching style as a blend of different approaches that signal common subcultural reference points.

## Making the journey to committed teacher-practitioner

As I explained in Chapter 1, not only are the majority of attendees at these post-lineage events already yoga teachers, a high proportion of attendees contribute teaching or other forms of service at each camp itself. At the Beltane Bhakti Gathering, where any profit goes to charitable causes, almost everyone contributes to some extent both financially, and in terms of practical service. At Santosa it is estimated that for every attendee who is not teaching on site, there is another who is, plus another on an 'elf' ticket, contributing at least 4 hours of practical service a day. At many events, the casual attendee is outnumbered as much as two to one by committed members of the community. Only at Colourfest is the proportion of working community members significantly smaller than that of paying, often less invested participants. Therefore, committed post-lineage practitioners are not just at the heart of post-lineage events, they are often in the majority.

Changing roles from a casual attendee to a contributing member of the post-lineage community as a yoga teacher entails passing certain tests. Each camp organiser controls which teachers, musicians and other facilitators are given space on the schedule. Organisers differ in their criteria, but at every event included in my research, the quality of one's teaching was not the only factor. A willingness to perform the most mundane of *sevā*, and a commitment to inclusive teaching, and to warm relationships with the rest of the community, are also essential. Some yoga teachers fail that test:

"They show up and it's muddy, and they can't look very glamorous, and they've got to shit in a composting toilet and eat rice and dal. [...] They're welcome to come, but they tend not to be very successful in the teaching" – Uma

For those who do become established members of this subculture, post-lineage yoga events provide them with some modest economic advantages, in accessing a wider pool of potential students to fill their own retreats and courses. But all established community members

consider such rewards to be a minor consideration. They talk frequently of ‘filling themselves up’ for the year ("A Taste of Santosa" 2014). Connecting with the *saṃgha* or practice community reinforces the deep dedication to experimentation and reflexivity necessary for both individual practice and teaching others.

For this majority group, both the shared subculture and individual practice also function as a refuge and wellspring of resistance to a wider culture that many still experience as more or less hostile:

“You go out into the world and sometimes things can really feel like a physical blow. [...] And so in a sense, you're cleansing your body of those physical blows by trying to get back to that original source.” – Veronika

The pristine self and pristine world that Veronika describes in Case study 1 are porous not only to each other, but to the forces of mundane culture that surround us all. The mundane world, like the mundane self, is never wholly escapable (Orsi 2012: 153). Many of my participants come together at these events as a result of their disillusionment with the endless health and abundance promised by yoga gurus, institutions and brands alike (Remski 2015a). As I wrote in Chapter 4, post-lineage yoga can be a refuge for the non-neurotypical, but also the chronically ill, and all those who use the practice to manage low-level and treatment-resistant conditions in a non-medical way, but whose differences from the majority make standardised yoga practices much less accessible. And many practitioners encountered in my fieldwork seek not just symptom management, but a reclamation of agency, active resistance to high social levels of anxiety (PlanC 2015), and a transformation of the idea of universal healing into cyclical rhythms of self-maintenance.

“I dislocated my ankle a few weeks ago anyway. And I've got a broken toe on the other foot from a couple of years back, so I've always got to do some hip maintenance stuff” – Veronika, Case study 1

“Capitalism is the sort of - almost the arch anti-yogic event. It's separatist, nihilistic materialism of the worst kind” – Christopher, Case study 2

For such members of the subculture, the support of a post-lineage *saṃgha* or learning community is vital to their ongoing ability to thrive and teach within a wider socio-political system that routinely under-resources those in self-employed creative and caring professions such as teaching yoga. A deeper connection to this post-lineage subculture is often provoked by negative experiences in life or in yoga. It is always accompanied by a significant

commitment to self-reflexive practice. It is also consistent with a certain alienation with mainstream societal norms.

One common desire among female teachers of post-lineage yoga is for a less-patriarchal form of yoga than that which they first encountered (Westoby 2018; Cixous and Sellers 1994: 62), even to heal from abusive encounters with male yoga teachers (Lucas 2016). As Uma says in Case study 3, “we’re all good daughters of patriarchy so we’re used to doing what we’re told”. For Uma, Sivani Mata, and many others, a practice more overtly attuned to the experiences and histories of women can heal a wounded female self, broken female body and corrupted world-as-goddess in one. Post-lineage yoga practice for these immersed and highly reflexive practitioners attempts to reclaim a supposed unpredictable wild self from the more normative female self of mainstream culture (Cixous 1976: 876). But in doing so, they are inevitably wresting self-nourishment from bodily practices created through patriarchal discipline (Ginot 2010: 23), further marked by the historical struggle between a subaltern Indian and an oppressive British culture.

“My practice would be three hours. And over an hour of that would be *āsana*. [...] I became anaemic and then I just did *yoganidrā* for over a year” – Sivani Mata, Case study 4

As a result, in post-lineage yoga, the narratives surrounding this transformation often speak of imperfect solutions, of managing or reconciling rather than healing, and of carrying what cannot be fixed (Devine 2015). In post-lineage yoga, the healing oasis glimpsed in Sivani Mata’s practice in Case Study 4, is a space in which to reframe as much as transform the self and its world.

But some of the deeper wounds held by the most reflexive practitioners are visible only when their most profound experiences of loss have been thoroughly domesticated by individual practice, and are ready for sharing with a wider audience, whether that is the casual attendee of a camp, or the students they serve in everyday life. The making of shared subcultural experiences here is laminar: a mundane chronic pain or a deeper root of suffering is laminated in layers of experiences of ease and reconciliation, each one intimately formed not just from movement and stillness, but from the time and place of practice, and its narrative framing and instruction. The newly transformed identity of the teacher-practitioner, and the re-framed meaning of their experiences are formed through accretion, hardened through a process of witnessing and storying the self. Thus, the esoteric structures of *nāḍīs* and *cakras* become a part of Tanya’s lived identity in Case Study 5, using visualisation, *mantra* and crystals. And song cycles of nourishment and healing hum during Uma’s *yoganidrā* (fig. 81, over page).

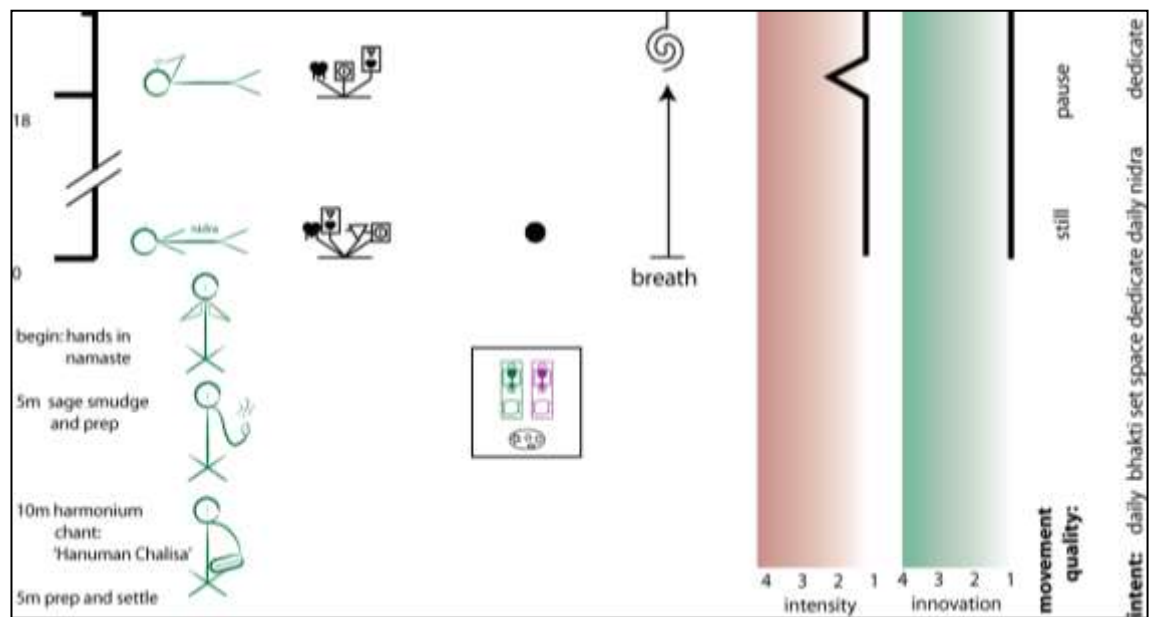


Fig. 81a. Case study 3: Dreaming in *yoganidrā*



Fig. 81b. Case study 3: Dreaming in *yoganidrā*

When these newly coherent selves and transformed experiences are repeated for others, deeply individualised experiences can be fitted into a wider cultural repertoire of stories. Publicly performed identities extrude from privately emergent identities, formed in individual practice, and translated into the language of common subcultural association, powered by charisma. Deeply felt stories emerge from re-enchanted spaces, carried by deeply practised bodies, with the power to change others.

The most visible reward of long-term, individual post-lineage yoga practice, or indeed any committed movement practice, is a unified and coherent quality of presence and movement. Established members of the subculture are often recognisable by the way they move even outside of the practice. At Colourfest, waiting for a dance session to begin, one teacher pointed out to me that among over a thousand attendees, experienced practitioners could be recognised by how they walked across the site towards the practice space, even before their faces came into focus.

Self-reflexive practices combine over time to form embodied repertoires of physical grace. Overall movement becomes more efficient and intuitive, but also diverse and expressive. In individual practice actions flow out of each other, counter-balancing and inspiring the next expression of repertoire, moment to moment, as in Sivani Mata's practice, (fig. 82).

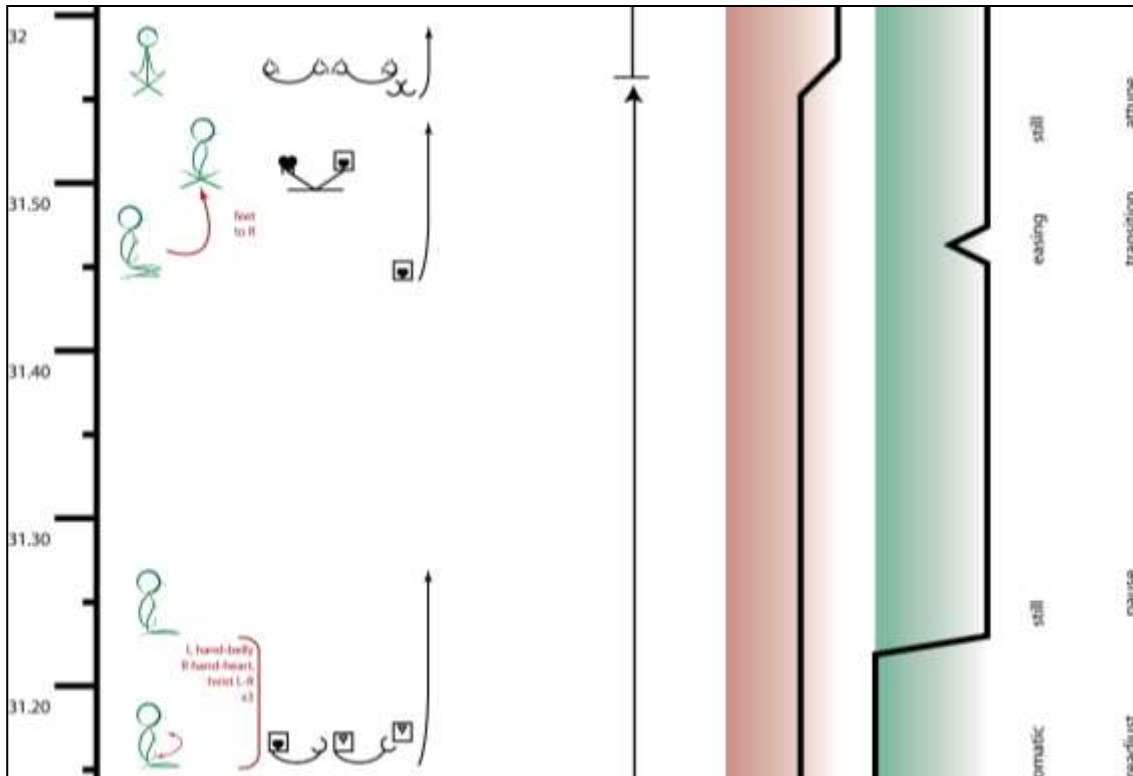


Fig. 82a. Case study 4: Moment to moment awareness



Fig. 82b. Case study 4: Moment to moment awareness

In the everyday rhythms of individual practice, such transformation comes from repetition. After one movement, the practitioner is a person who has carried out the movement. After many repetitions, the practitioner is a person who is partly defined by doing the movement: a person who practises yoga, rather than a person who has practised it. Eventually authority over that movement is also conferred: the practitioner becomes the author of this variation of the movement. But the practice continues to evolve, as with Uma's iconic, repeated but never identical Womb Yoga *vināsa* or movement sequence in Case Study 3. The aim is a pristine self

that is both remembered and logically unimaginable (Stirk 2015: 7). Whether that perfect self can ever be realised is irrelevant. Aiming for it enables the practitioner to sit with the instability of the self-at-present.

The redrawn boundaries around the locus of 'self' 'group' and 'world' that result are temporary. This is ecology with agency. It can be mundane and depleting, challenging and resistant, or humbling and nourishing. Every movement is both a tactile relationship and a renegotiation with gravity, every meditative moment is an exploration of inside and outside and edges (Ingold 2011: 24). The body becomes that which one yoga thinker describes as a "field of radiant sensation" (Miller and Schoomaker 2015: 183). We are, as Christopher reminds us in Case Study 2, a microbial temple. And every interpersonal connection in the subculture is embedded in physical processes that shared and individual practice variously enhances, and helps to render visible: mimesis, entrainment, and pheromonal attraction (Sheets-Johnstone 2012: 397).

This deeply introspective, fluid experience is what drives committed, long-term practice, even if the initial impulse to explore the subculture is very different. It explains the connections post-lineage yoga teachers make between the personal, the communal, the political and the ecological. At the heart of post-lineage yoga, as a practice that combines devotion, self-awareness and discipline, is a need to remake oneself within the world: to reconfigure our most fundamental relations within a more than human web. As Uma is fond of quoting: "You may dissolve in contemplation, as salt does in water, but there's something more that must happen" (Ded and Hoskote 2013: 30).

## The tension between charisma and pragmatism for the organiser and activist

Within the tangled web of relationships supporting this post-lineage subculture, smaller networks can be differentiated along the fault lines of engagement. The wider pool of casual attendees is the most weakly connected within the subculture, the most dependent on the core community at its heart for access to subcultural events, and also the most connected to the cultural mainstream. Entangled and somewhat inseparable from it is the inner network of dedicated and reflexive yoga teachers as detailed in the previous section. These yoga teachers are also supported by and overlap with other established community members, including site crew and *bhakti* musicians, who may also have their own individual practice, less visible within the repertoires of shared spaces.



Deeper still is the much tinier network of event organisers such as Rowan and Robbie of Colourfest, Uma of Santosa, John and Tanya of Sundara, and Trishula, whose Beltane Bhakti Gathering has been included, but not profiled in this thesis. Interviews with these vital members of their chosen communities revealed a further level of investment in the subculture, and another difference in reward and risk. Organisers are also among the most invested, not only in the subculture, but in the most highly reflexive of individual practices. As Uma says, her practice is about “healing what can be healed, nourishing what can be nourished.”

In post-lineage yoga, as in most informal networks, local individuals such as these function as gatekeepers to community events and thus cultural resources (Castells 2011: 773). Despite the informal, interpersonal nature of affiliation here, this is not an insular subculture. It maintains more direct links to India in particular than are prevalent in North American yoga culture, as exemplified by Brown (2015). A number of teachers make yearly trips to India, and a few are Indian by birth. Trishula, who also performs at the camps with the Babaji Temple Singers, is the daughter of a Brahmin family. A small but significant number of other teachers are British Hindus. These teachers have diverse histories, dependent on the complex intersectionality of their socio-political status.

Trishula has fond memories of childhood Durga *pūjās* in Sheffield, accompanied by acute recollections of being forbidden by her gender to perform certain ritual acts. She speaks movingly of her debut as a public ritualist, enabled by white, male priests of the Babaji lineage. She says:

“When I offered the water, as I was doing that, I really felt my dad so strong because I had been so many times standing in the crowd when he has done that. And so there was a moment of how our own relationship with our parents is so mixed.”

As a result, she is very aware of how gatekeepers structure access to religious knowledge.



Trishula leading *pūjā*, Beltane Bhakti Gathering

Contemporary yoga culture appears to be dominated by the many commercial and standardised, large scale interpretations of yoga which monetise subcultural and traditional cultural resources through mechanisms marked by exoticisation, exploitation and superficial engagement (Oh and Sarkisian 2012: 301; Carrette and King 2013: 117). In contrast, gatekeepers in this post-lineage network at least are characterised by their length of dedication to the practice and lack of interest in financial wealth. But prejudices of many kinds can be born in any situation where people are free to choose the intuitive comfort of consorting with people they already admire or resemble (Caldarelli and Catanzaro 2012: 75-6).

Whilst all organisers expressed enthusiasm for their role, the personal cost of running events is also high. Every year more than one considers taking a “fallow year” to recover, but almost always finds the inspiration to continue anyway, during the dreaming and planning of the winter season. Those organisers who were open with me about their financial investment in their events confirmed that they pay themselves far more rarely than others, despite spending most of the year planning and preparing for a single event. As Rowan says of Colourfest:

“We're spending money on those things because we want the event to be immense. But [...] we've put the equivalent of five years of our lives into the festival and it's not helping us do what we need in our life. It's not helping us to put our kids through school.”

Added to this, organisers seem more likely to encounter a level of interpersonal conflict that leads in some cases to them leaving core teams and creating new events. For the subculture as a whole, this is positive, as it leads to events multiplying, increasing choice. But in private, some at the heart of the subculture expressed enduring regret at the loss of friendship or personal investment involved. Falling out and moving on can have a greater impact on organisers. Although they are among the visible and connected nodes within the community network, organisers can experience a form of localised micro-celebrity, in which their self-presentation is bound to the feel of the event as a whole, rendering their experiences on site subordinate to their own image.

Post-lineage yoga avoids the institutionalisation of charisma that is characteristic of the vertical organisational structures of lineage and large brand. But its overlapping affinity groups and communities of practice are still subject to interpersonal power dynamics. This includes the charismatic power that accrues to certain teachers and some organisers. Part of that charisma is born from their apparent effortlessness in intensity, the evident difference in who they are as a result of being remade by practice. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 9 and 10, the echoes of those domesticated experiences confer resonant charisma to the way they share

practice, whilst the community networks described in Chapter 11 guard against any single teacher coming to dominate the subculture.

Whether charismatic teachers or not, all the organisers also maintain close relationships with those practitioners who are the most committed to other forms of activism. The mundane but significant personal sacrifice involved in organising an event is seen to be of a kind with the sacrifice involved in organising projects like the One Spirit Ashram Kitchen discussed earlier in the thesis. And that activism encourages a much more pragmatic than charismatic self-presentation.

Not everyone in post-lineage yoga communities will be directly engaged in the higher-risk actions of environmental and social justice. But many post-lineage practitioners are in more supportive roles to action, gathering winter clothes to send to Calais, hosting fundraising events or joining communications blockades and boycotts. Of those that go further, some will do so because their own histories mean they are more comfortable with the social marginalisation involved, or with the scale of the task, and others because they are leveraging specific privileges to mitigate the risks. The One Spirit Ashram Kitchen relies on all of these. Those underwriting and overseeing the investment of infrastructure had time and money to spare. They overlapped with managers who had experience of feeding hundreds of people with very little resources at camps like Santosa and Sundara. And they were joined by a backbone of long-term volunteers who themselves lived transient lifestyles.

“Just knowing how little it costs to serve per meal. [...] We came with that knowledge. And also, of everyone mucking in, what a great community thing it was.” – Ian from One Spirit Ashram Kitchen

Within such environments as the Calais Jungle, where the very existence of the refugee camp was a daily struggle, activists relied on personal resources of equanimity, compassion and moment-to-moment awareness often honed in self-care practices, but the chaotic situation on the ground now made practice more pragmatic.

“I used to do so much meditation and 45 minutes of *mantras* every morning. I've fallen off that horse somehow. [...] Living on the road and living out the back of a transit, really. It hasn't helped.” – Ian

The pragmatic activist and the event organiser have thus both evolved their practice to aim for a life that is ‘good enough’ rather than exceptional and thus charismatic. Uma talks about singing her daily mantras to Hanuman whilst driving from workshop to event. Veronika practices her *yoganidrā* with her children at bedtime. The activist-practitioner is pragmatic

precisely because the personal rewards of practice have become subordinate to, indeed inseparable from life off the mat. Their practice evolves to train for self-resilience, equanimity, and empathic compassion, in the hope of constructing a 'good enough', ethical life. And they believe that even the simple self-nourishment offered to beginners at a post-lineage event can be a radical act in a culture that values consumption and production above all else. As one activist from the group Rising Up (see 'Rising Up' 2018) said to me:

“I think that ability to grieve and keep your heart open and not close down, I suppose that's really what I think [is] yoga”

The organiser and activist may practise in remembrance of a unique and yet universal pristine self to be reached in a far-future incarnation, but also for a world that will evolve in equally incremental ways. Such social justice concerns are the invisible context behind many of the intentions and rewards of post-lineage yoga. Post-lineage yoga emerges from disparate groups of modern postural yoga practitioners, coming together in the search of answers that their existing practice could not provide. The community solidarity and experimental methods they developed attracts other teacher-practitioners from lineages more open to collaborative knowledge. The emergent subculture works hard to provide accessible opportunities for more people to discover not just the benefits of the practice, but the importance of a reflexivity that turns out as well as inwards, and honours a more than human world. Regardless of initial intentions, the results of long-term post-lineage practice are wide-ranging. Whilst the practice may entail fraught negotiations with difficult histories, hope for both personal evolution and social justice is ever present.

Supporting the subcultural landscape outlined above, in the next chapter I will consider the connection between individual and group practice, as it is formed through peer-networked, post-lineage teaching. I will outline my argument that it is the inevitable gaps in transmitting such an individualised, interoceptive practice to others that allow for rapid innovation, and that personal and led practices are the two pillars of post-lineage evolution. I shall also consider mimesis and entrainment in more detail, and what else might be riding in the transmission of post-lineage yoga.



## 9. Teaching post-lineage yoga

The heart of transmission within post-lineage, or indeed any contemporary or modern incarnation of yoga culture, is the subject of this chapter: the practice as it is taught to others. But as demonstrated in my literature review, the actual teaching of yoga has rarely been the subject of significant scholarly study. As a result, this chapter will begin with a brief history of the evolution of yoga teaching, allowing for comparison both between the pre-modern and modern development of yoga transmission (De Michelis 2007: 6) and to post-lineage yoga as a growing tendency, approached through the specific subculture found in my research. In Chapters 10 and 11 I will show how this translation of individual practice into group teaching extends to the creation of new subcultural content, and how that endeavour is enabled by vital community networks that sustain the subculture as a whole. It is in the teaching of post-lineage yoga that this otherwise solitary practice gains its subcultural coherence and also its diversity, as it is unevenly translated from body to body.

### The context of yoga teaching techniques

The translation of any religious practice through time and space involves an evolution in the nature of authority to determine that practice, and changes in the nature of authority enable the intentions for practice to change. From pre-modern to modern postural, to post-lineage yoga, the authority to prescribe practice for the student is also consistent with the authority to define epistemological and ontological frameworks for the practice. Yet the impact of changes in authority, and thus teaching itself, has been piecemeal and often little understood even by yoga teachers themselves.

In the pre-modern period, despite some textual support, most transmission of yoga as a practice was achieved directly between an individual student and teacher, known as *guru-śiṣya* teaching (Singleton and Mallinson 2017: 69) and still held by traditionalists to be the gold standard for the authentic transmission of yoga. Instruction was commonly transmitted via verbal authority: the adept is to do as the guru says, rather than as the guru demonstrates. Many pre-modern texts on yoga emphasize isolation for practice (Powell 2017). In contrast, transmission since the advent of modern postural yoga has been largely achieved via synchronous group teaching. Some rare forms of *hathayoga* persist that are taught in the traditional fashion. Lead researcher for the Hatha Yoga Project, James Mallinson (Mallinson and Singleton 2017), himself learned *hathayoga* from a guru in India who instructed him in the basic shape of a pose and left him to explore each one for some time on his own.

In fig. 83, a candid shot of Mallinson in a headstand (Mallinson 2018), alongside a contemporary graphic from a well-known online yoga teacher, is consistent with the lack of postural detail in pre-modern teaching compared to the extensive verbal instruction and physical adjustments included in most of modern postural yoga (Moore 2013, below right; Hauser 2013b: 114-5). Like Mallinson, pre-modern students and adepts were largely expected to find their balance on their own.

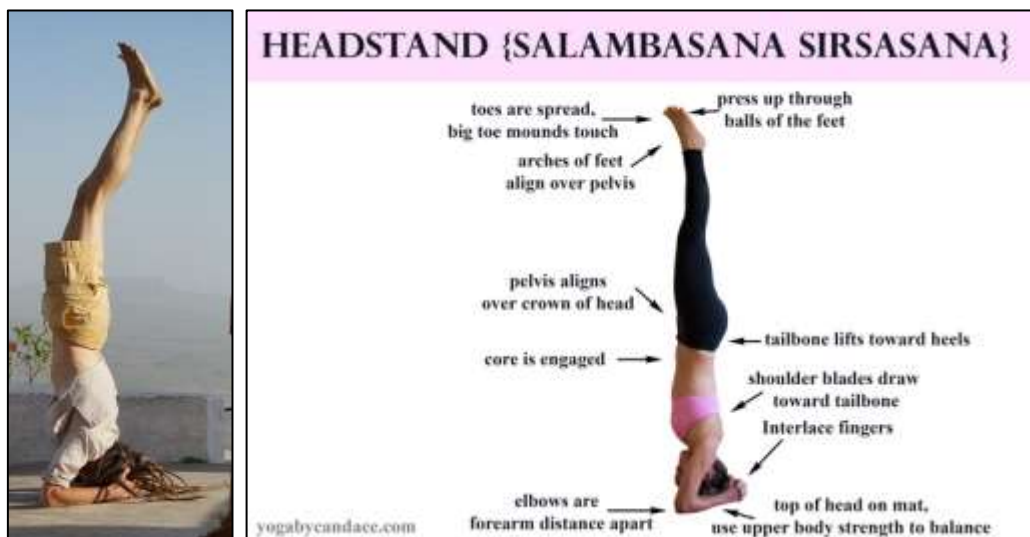


Fig. 83. Finding balance with and without help

It is possible to give a similarly generalised portrait of the differences in teaching style between a typical modern postural yoga lesson and a post-lineage yoga session, by returning to the broad sketch given in Chapter 1. As I wrote there, modern postural yoga instruction confines itself to pre-set techniques drawn from the repertoire of only one among the dominant lineages or brands. Furthermore, the modern postural yoga teacher is an expert instructor, issuing commands to students based on universalised ideas of correct posture and movement. Modern postural yoga allocates the authority for student bodily alignment, as well as any associated meaning-making to the central expertise of the teacher. Typical examples include online advice for both students (Peacock 2017) and teachers (Loupe 2018), and teacher training manuals (Friend 2008). Teachers will also spend time encouraging students to develop a level of discipline that can sustain a regular individual practice consistent with the system as it is taught. The authority of one's lineage or school is transmitted directly from teacher to teacher, and to students, through the repetition of the teaching content as a complete pedagogical system that governs both shared and individual practice. Where innovation in teaching occurs, it must be consistent with the brand, or ratified by the teaching hierarchy. When teachers do find useful new practice elements outside of the established system,

references to sources are often minimised in preference for emphasising their coherence with the brand or lineage.

In contrast, each post-lineage teacher's practice repertoire includes elements from a range of lineages, schools, and even non-yoga movement practices. Post-lineage teachers are more often guides than instructors, facilitating a range of options for students to choose between. As a result, post-lineage yoga teachers are less likely to correct or physically adjust students. They are also more likely to openly acknowledge diverse sources for their knowledge, mentioning articles they have read or workshops they have taken. They are more likely to emphasise the newness or innovation of recent additions to their repertoires than their consistency with existing practice. And in encouraging the development of an individual practice among students, post-lineage teachers are equally likely to stress the importance of intuition as of discipline.

This difference can be further illustrated using a poetic metaphor from Matthew Remski: that of the "stonecutter and the baby whisperer" (2014b). Modern postural yoga teachers are like junior sculptors within a large studio, exposing the ideal form within each student body according to the instructions of an (absent) master craftsman. Post-lineage teachers are more like independent therapists, using a peer-agreed toolkit of techniques to coax the student body back to its own, innate wisdom. But just as in Chapter 1, this description is generalised, and emphasises the differences rather than consistencies between modern postural and post-lineage teaching styles.

Although older transmission forms persist (Smith 2008: 140), from a pre-modern era characterised by one-to-one initiation and instruction by rote dependent on the spiritual authority of the guru, the modern renaissance of the practice evolved to include colonial and corporal discipline, and later in the twentieth century, standardisation and anatomical alignment (Sarbacker 2014: 106). Throughout this process, the authority to determine practice rested with the status of each teacher, within a hierarchy of knowledge. In the translation of guru and group class to an international sphere, the exponential increase in numbers of devotees, and levels of teaching hierarchy, meant ever more power accrued to the guru, whilst the usual scepticism towards such 'god-men' has largely failed to expand accordingly (Newcombe 2017: 19). As Roy Rappaport asks, "the fundamental question to ask about any evolutionary change is 'What does this change maintain unchanged?'" (1999: 7). Whilst post-lineage yoga questions many of the assumptions governing authority in modern postural yoga, in the ritual that is the teaching of yoga, the aura of authenticity that pervades the *guru-śiṣya*



relationship continues to confer an aura of mysticism and charismatic power onto teacher-student relationships to differing degrees.

Many of the historical and ongoing changes in teaching practices are intimately connected to the rising ratio or at least visibility of female practitioners and teachers compared to male ones (Mallinson and Singleton 2017: 52; Singleton 2013: 51). Historical teachers from Indra Devi (Goldberg 2016b) to Vanda Scaravelli (1991) and contemporary teachers such as Angela Farmer (van Kooten 1997) and Uma Dinsmore-Tuli (2013b) have been at the forefront of many radical departures in teaching that precipitated a post-lineage shift in authority by some, from lineage to community, and from pedagogical control to inspiration and encouragement (Davies 2013: 42). More recent investigations into the biographies of a number of such teachers reveals one factor in that shift is the encounters of some female teachers with injury or ethical failings in lineage environments (Remski 2017). As Scaravelli writes: “The worship of authority, of gurus, priests, teachers, is over. To question authority is the mark of a good mind, unafraid to explore” (1991: 48).

Not all abusive behaviour is carried out by charismatic male gurus within patriarchal lineage structures, however. Any ecstatic breakdown of the mundane self can be understood as either liberation or depersonalisation, no matter who leads the process, or the size of the group, or the authority structure which legitimates it. Some criminal actions are the product of groups rather than leaders (Falk 2009: 137) and some abusive experiences are led by young, female teachers (Scofield 2018). Although less often than men, female yoga teachers are occasionally accused of financial, emotional and sexual abuse by their students and devotees (Tredwell 2013; Remski 2016c).

As confirmed by my fieldwork data, women have found in yoga a rare space to lead powerful rituals, and shepherd congregations of their students. For some, contemporary yoga more broadly offers the opportunity to reclaim agency over their religious life as much as over their health (Aune 2011: 97; Westoby 2018). The role of both modern postural and post-lineage yoga teacher is therefore also a pastoral one. Modern postural yoga is partly popular because the promise of a series of set *āsanas* with confidently-expressed universal benefits, which are selected in line with teacher-diagnosed needs, is attractive to a student body of casual practitioners, drawn from contemporary populations that are commonly held to be both extremely anxious and somatically dissociative (Apperley, Jacobs, and Jones 2014: 726; Lavrence and Lozanski 2014: 80). The marketing promises of most modern postural yoga schools are thus consistent with the common scholarly conclusion that contemporary yoga culture consists mostly of health-conscious casual practitioners with the vaguest of

understandings of the practice (Carrette and King 2013: 117; De Michelis 2007: 3). This is a scholarly conclusion that this thesis has already challenged. Yoga teaching styles that are consistent with such intentions aim to reassure, to keep safe, to entice students from more popular to less accessible offerings, and above all to improve, often through the demonstration of theoretically universal models of health and experience (Jain 2014a: 112).

Yet recent research suggests such biomechanical universality may be largely illusory (Gilman 2014: 63), and such subjective experiences as “good” health, wellbeing and confident awareness of self-movement to all be complex, socio-politically-influenced phenomena (Lederman 2010: 10; Geeves et al. 2014: 682). Besides this, corrective instruction of posture and movement risks inducing adverse responses in which healthy ranges of movement become more restricted than before (Behnke 1997: 189; Tumminello and Silvernail 2017). And the large amount of detailed instructional stimuli delivered by many yoga teachers can itself enhance the possibility of reducing agency (Stirk 2015: xii), learning capacity (Junker 2013: 167; Goldberg 2016a: 402) and even a student’s ability to perform as instructed (Kane 2018; Wulf 2013: 90).

Furthermore, despite the ongoing evolution in teaching in yoga, few if any modern postural, or indeed post-lineage, yoga subcultures have developed a coherent teaching philosophy to underpin the mechanics of instructional techniques. Although there has been a rapid increase in all forms of yoga teacher training from the late twentieth century onwards, the emphasis in the majority of courses is on the *content* rather than the *reasons* for teaching protocols. This is most often framed by a brief discussion of Patañjali’s *yamas* and *niyamas*, or rules for ethical conduct, used to structure online advice to students (Siber 2015), and as a mandatory inclusion in teacher training curricula by accreditation bodies (IYN 2018).

Examples of more robust and detailed ethical codes exist, but as the explanation for one draft explains: “the prevailing argument is that Patanjali’s Yamas and Niyamas should be enough” (O’Sullivan 2017). Besides these, there is as yet, no generally agreed scope of practice, code of ethics, or even agreement on which organisations or individuals would be consulted in creating them (Jain 2014a: 97). The kind of peer and mentor support structures so vital to many therapeutic professions are informal, and rare.

This situation is starting to change, but the changes implemented in the process are frequently controversial, as demonstrated by the often outraged responses to proposed National Occupational Standards for yoga in the UK (SkillsActive 2017; Remski 2016a). Within post-lineage yoga, as with every other aspect of the subculture, responses to the issue of standardisation are diverse, often innovative, and frequently individualised, but non-

institutional solutions are always preferred. Many would agree with Vanda Scaravelli that “yoga cannot be organized, must not be organized. Organisations kill work” (Scaravelli 1991: 68).

## Post-lineage innovations in teaching

Post-lineage yoga allows for more diverse models of authority and instruction. But as shown in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, post-lineage individual practice is an expression of each person’s unique inner history. This increases a post-lineage yoga teacher’s reluctance to universalise bodily alignment and experience to others. It reinforces a clear shift in teaching expertise: from the confidence to prescribe on behalf of students, to methods to improve each student’s ability to navigate the practice. This personalised empowerment reflects the subculture as a whole in its search for independence from wider yoga culture and contemporary norms.

Many innovations in post-lineage instruction are consistent with participatory teaching styles. The most common technique is the linked use of invitational language with accessibility modifications and protocols of consent. In the camp environment, it is assumed that all sessions will be accessible to all unless otherwise stated. The right to enter and leave a session at any time is universal. Consistent with this is a growing use of the invitational language and consent-to-touch protocols of trauma-informed yoga, as developed by Emerson and Hopper (2012), and Hala Khouri (2016), among others (Jones 2017).

One session at Sundara is typical of ‘trauma-informed’ instruction (fig. 84):

“Perhaps keeping the hips lifted and then taking the arms by the side of the body. You can even, if you want to, walk the heels in a little more so you can feel that sense of lift. [...] Not pushing in an unkind way or uncomfortable way. Easing and listening. [...] Taking your time and noticing the sensations of the body.” – Calma yoga session



Fig. 84a. Sundara: ‘Trauma-informed’ instruction

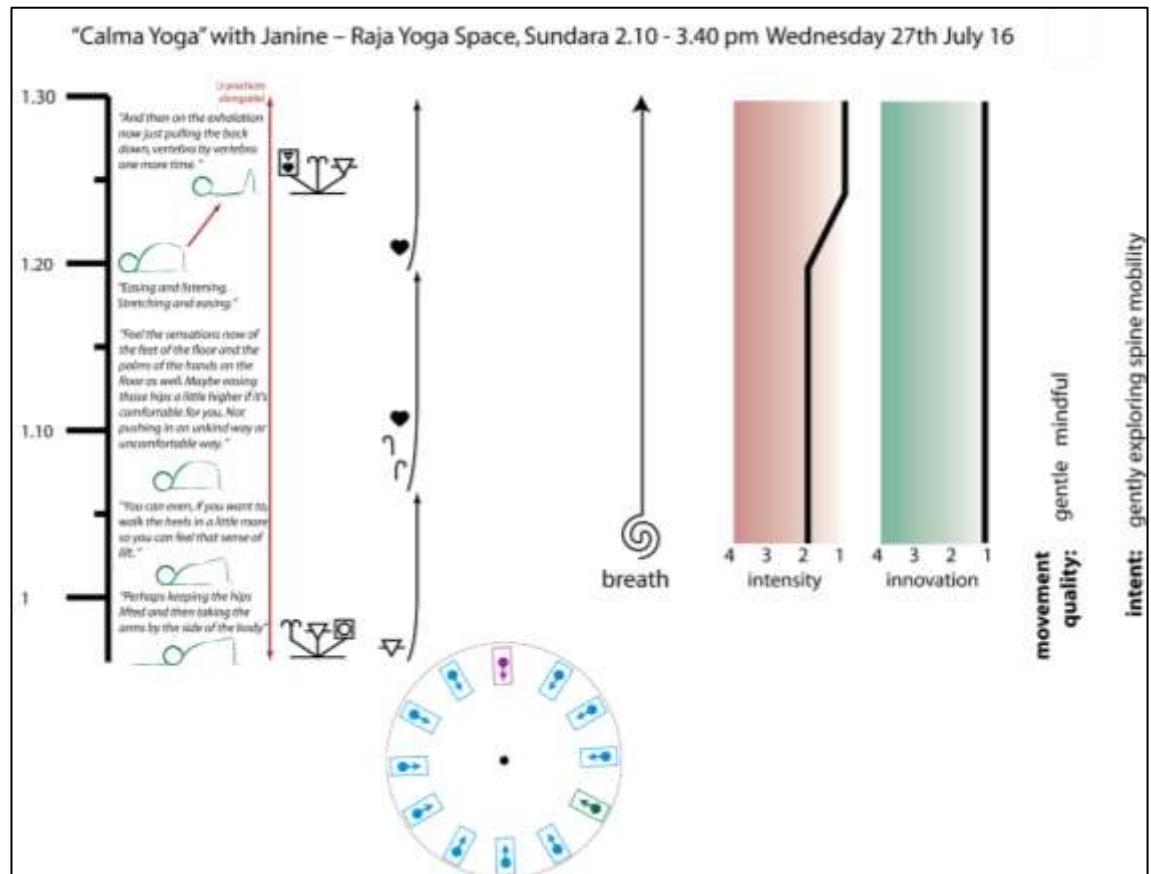


Fig. 84b. Sundara: 'Trauma-informed' instruction

The importing of trauma-informed protocols results from the rising use of yoga and other somatic practices that promote neural self-regulation in the management of PTSD and anxiety related conditions (Brom et al. 2017: 1; Compson 2014: 276). A number of post-lineage yoga teachers in this subculture, such as the teacher in fig. 84, work in this therapeutic field. Therapeutic modalities for the management of trauma symptoms also increasingly emphasise the promotion of decision-making by clients whose greatest common experience is a loss of agency or control over life events (Van der Kolk 2014: 27). Such techniques are therefore by no means exclusive to post-lineage yoga but they can be enabled by a willingness to question prevailing orthopraxy, and include diverse methods for developing an internal locus of practice authority. Post-lineage teachers are thus more likely to be early adopters of such techniques, putting such subcultures often ahead of the curve of transnational yoga teaching norms.

Post-lineage transmission characteristically includes a number of other methods for distributing the authority over practice choice and interpretation. Among the simplest, and most common, is the practice of teaching in a circle, where every student's visual attention is on the group, rather than in lines, where each student faces only the teacher (Sheets-Johnstone 2017: 16). These circles are echoed in a practice repertoire that more commonly

includes circular and spiral movements. In transmission these pulsating or circular movements allow each student to repeat, innovate, and work at their own pace within the timing of the session, as we can see in the two examples below. In the Chi Yoga session at Santosa discussed in Chapter 5 (fig. 85), circular movements of the ankles and then rising and falling motions of the knees are instructed in time with the student's breath rhythm, but with little anatomical detail, leaving students to explore their own version of the movement.

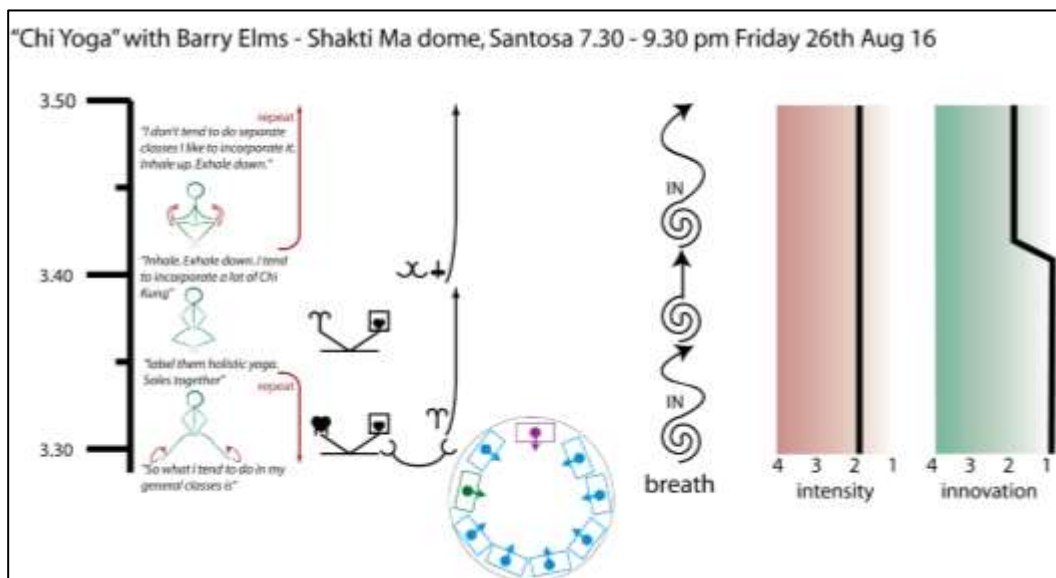


Fig. 85. Santosa: Finding your own rhythm

In the Shakti Dance session in fig. 86, students are moving to the unifying rhythm of the music, but are overtly instructed to explore shapes in movement that are variations on a theme.

“They can go in spirals, they can go in open curtains... Then going slowly. Lower. Around the solar plexus... Imagine that there is a vortex, pulling out like a fan.” –  
Shakti Dance session at Colourfest



Fig. 86a. Colourfest: Exploring movement variations

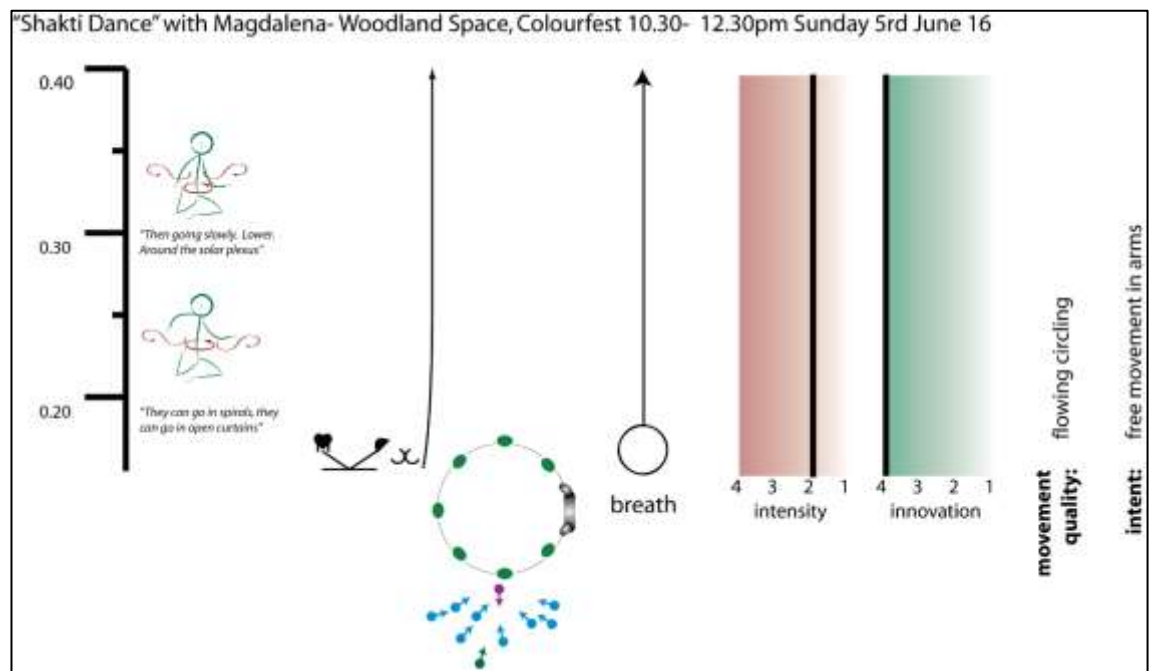


Fig. 86b. Colourfest: Exploring movement variations

The emphasis moves away from achieving a set shape and moving on at the sanctioned time, to an internalised process of witnessing and experimenting consistent with the practice cycle. Within a circle, that process of witnessing can be externalised to the group, as in this Authentic Movement session from Colourfest (fig. 87):

"We're going to invite any one of us, or two of us, to step into the middle and explore their dance while being witnessed. So, taking what you've discovered already and allowing yourself to be seen and to be heard and to be met by the group."



Fig. 87. Colourfest: Witnessing as a group

More recently, collaborations between teachers are becoming increasingly popular at all three of my fieldwork sites. These are not pre-planned in great detail, and as yet, they are still

experimental. Nevertheless, they allow for authority to be further distributed to multiple people in the session, and for students to appreciate that teaching is emergent and contingent on both place and participants.

A COLLABORATIVE MOVEMENT & DANCE JAM 1		
9.30-11.00 Creative connections - Embodied presence	9.30-11.00 Contact improv with Richard Parker	9.30-11.00 Authentic movement with Sam Bloomfield
11.00-12.00 A collaborative jam		
11.30-1.00 Sweet summer solstice with Emma Goodie	11.30-2.00 Odissi Indian classical dance with Morgan	12.00-1.30 5 Rhythms
2.00-4.30 Ace yoga with Pip & Eugene	3.00-4.30 Sensual flow subtle movement with STYLL	2.00-3.30 Aest & Hot yoga dance with Tia Taylor
4.30-6.30 Hand to hand dropstep introduction to handstand perfect yoga	5.00-6.30 TONING with Julia & John	4.00-5.30 DANCEmandala with Shula
7.30-9.00 Yoga & sounds with Angela Ross & DJ John Long	7.00-8.30 Dance to the song of the flower with Jan Jan	6.00-8.00 DJ Gabba
9.30-11.00 Kirtan - Sweet Mass & Breath	8.00-10.00 Dance collective World's Fair	8.00-9.30 Ecstasy live electronics DJ with DJTJ Luffman
		10.00-11.00 Ecstasy dance temple with DJTJ Luffman
		11.00-12.00 DJ NUB AC (Lund & Shalburg)
		12.00-1.00 Silent disco with Josh

at the FIRE	Dining Temple if wet). GREETINGS, CHANTS and POETRY SHARING.		
1030-1230 in Shiva	<b>UPLIFT YOUR HEART</b> Songs/ dances: Siri Sadhana	1030-1215 <b>YIN in YANG, YANG in YIN</b> Uma & Chris	1030-1200 <b>VAJRASATI YOGA</b> Tom
1030-1230 Outside	<b>PARKOUR GOES WILD</b> (10 max) Tejomaya	1215 2 <b>VOICE YOGA</b> NIDRA Uma & Chris	
1245-1400	<b>LUNCH</b> Annapurna Dining Temple. Eating as family when everyone's h		

8.30 - 9.30	<b>Breakfast</b>				
9.15 - 9.45	Camp Song around the Fire with Su Hart Blessing the Element of Fire				
10.00 - 12.00	Conscious Yoga Journey with Sundara Community Teachers				
12.30 - 13.30	<b>Closing Ceremony</b>				

Collaborative sessions in the schedules of Colourfest (2016), Santosa (2016) and Sundara (2017)

## The uneven translation of the practice cycle to group instruction

Like most contemporary yoga teachers, post-lineage teachers are lifelong learners (Van der Zee 1996: 165). As such, they tend to a form of self-development through self-education that means any new pedagogical models are acquired in a piecemeal rather than systematic manner. As a result, translating the individual practice cycle of audit, remedy, innovate and savour to group teaching is unevenly achieved. Opportunities to savour the rewards of practice are included in the intentional and energetic arc of all sessions, in moments of silence and

practices of more self-contained stillness, from meditations to relaxations to momentary pauses in restful poses.

In contrast, the balance between the audit and remedy parts of the cycle within each taught session varies significantly. As is widespread in modern postural yoga, some post-lineage teachers will still audit student needs for the group as a whole. Their instructions to students will focus on prescribing remedies, and consist of three main types: anatomical cues for bodily position which have roots in group exercise, corrective therapy and military drills (Armstrong 1953: 236); movement cues combined with experiential suggestions that predict a universal response to practice; and timing cues for the group choreography of breath and similar aspects which serve to entrain the group to a common rhythm. These will mostly be delivered through verbs of action, connected to experiential description in a predictive way. The challenge is to map every student's need effectively, and communicate any corrections or adjustments that can enhance the student's experience in a way that improves both their practice, and their understanding of it (McIlwain and Sutton 2014: 657).

Fig. 88 (over page) shows an example from a session at Sundara that retains a number of the above elements, but also signs of more individualisation and encouragement to student agency. To begin with, the teacher is instructing the group as a whole in a held *āsana*. At the same time, she is using her hands to guide a student's hip into what she considers to be a more appropriate alignment. The teacher proceeds to instruct the class in some detail in what she understands to be a universally safe process for transition to the next pose, but invites them to move in time with their own personal breath rate rather than a common rhythm. In the process, two options are given for knee position to accommodate different levels of flexibility. Here the extensive instruction is given so that the students can be confident that they are moving as expected, and the teacher's narrative style is more helpful than corrective, but an external and universal ideal is still in evidence. Finally, a universalised idea of what the new *āsana* will feel like to all is narrated by the teacher (in this case, irritable).

"Then as you breathe out, bring the right knee just outside your right wrist, or just kissing your right wrist. [...] If you're up for it, go for a straight shin parallel to the front of the mat. This gets very, very, very deep into your hip, which means you get nasty."  
Rise and Shine Yoga at Sundara





Fig. 88a. Sundara: Combining correction and accessibility

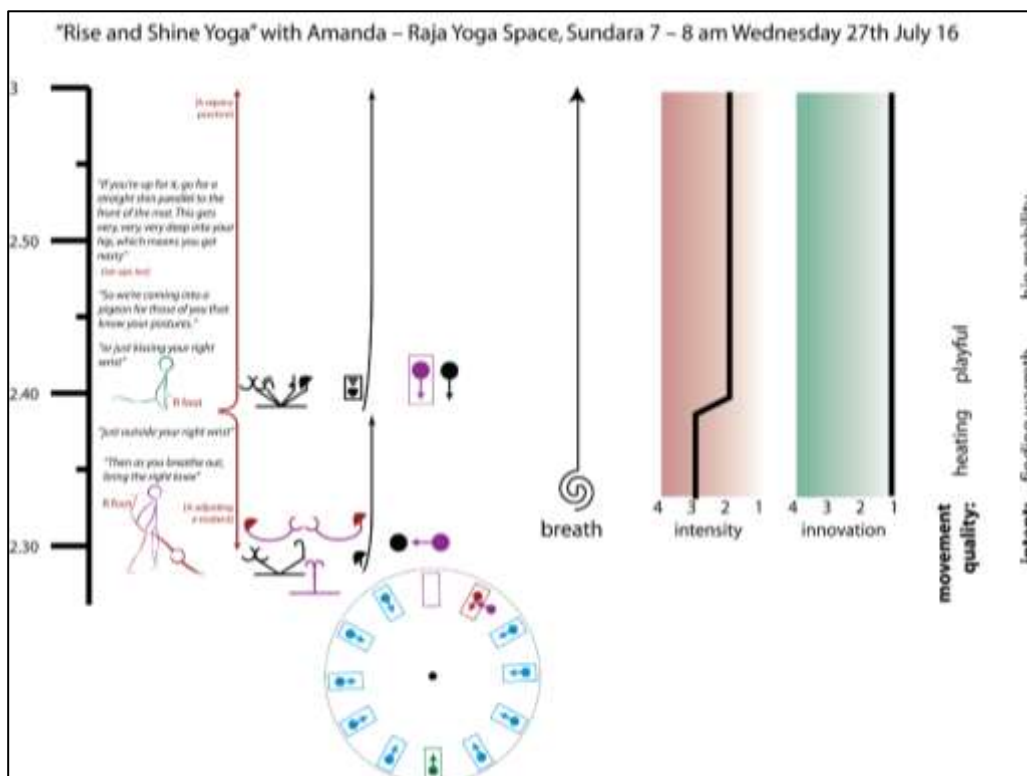


Fig. 88b. Sundara: Combining correction and accessibility

Post-lineage teachers who are more influenced by hybrid and alternative knowledge bases, such as dance, Scaravelli-inspired yoga, and the many divine feminine yoga schools, are more likely to concentrate their instruction on the audit phase of the cycle, and leave the choice of remedy or response more to the individual student. This type of teaching will consist mostly of cues and practices to improve awareness. Instructions are of three main types: cues to direct

Fig. 89 includes an example from a Scaravelli-inspired teacher at Colourfest. This extract is taken near the start of the session. The teacher's intention is to awaken the students' sensorimotor awareness and mobility in the feet. She directs their attention to their toes, and suggests that they "might" want to lift them as a response to what they experience. Her instructions are highly invitational, with various options offered. Finally, she asks the group to follow the inner guidance of their imaginations for the session as a whole. The challenge for this kind of instruction is to develop student awareness without imposing experience in an environment of high entrainment and suggestibility.

"Scaravelli Inspired Yoga" with Amba - Yoga Shala space, Colourfest 9 - 10.30am Sunday 5th June 16

1.20

1.10

1

"You might feel you even want to pick them up and play with them a little bit. Give them a wiggle, a stretch. So let your imagination guide your practice today."

"I'd like you to feel your toes in particular. So the big toe, and then going across all the toes."

breath

intensity

innovation

smooth

grounded

exploring feet and sensation

intention

Fig. 89b. Colourfest: Awakening awareness

Whilst teachers will tend to the invitational or prescriptive end of a spectrum, most will combine instruction styles, just as they combine practice elements from a range of sources.

The least common part of the practice cycle to translate to a group environment is the innovate aspect. Again, those teachers with invitational instruction styles are much more comfortable holding a pedagogical space for the spontaneous movement involved in encouraging student experimentation.

However the cycle is translated from individual to group practice, it is the gaps in perfect transmission between each teacher and each student in terms of diverse biomechanics, exact movement, somatic experience, and frameworks of meaning applied to the experience, recall and reproduction of post-lineage practice that most enable innovation (Sutton 2011: 356). Indeed, similar slippages in understanding contribute to the evolution of shared repertoires of all kinds (Cuffari, Paolo, and Jaegher 2015: 1121).

In every session can be found multiple examples of how such gaps in transmission promote diversity in practice. Fig. 90 and 91 comprise two short extracts from a session at Colourfest. In fig. 90, students are holding their left legs out straight, at first with the option of either holding the left foot, or the left thigh, and then with hands on waist. This is a challenging *āsana*, which the teacher has already acknowledged. Therefore although the notation of the practice at this point is simple, in the photos below, the interpretations of each student can be seen to vary considerably, as they struggle to reach and hold the desired shape.

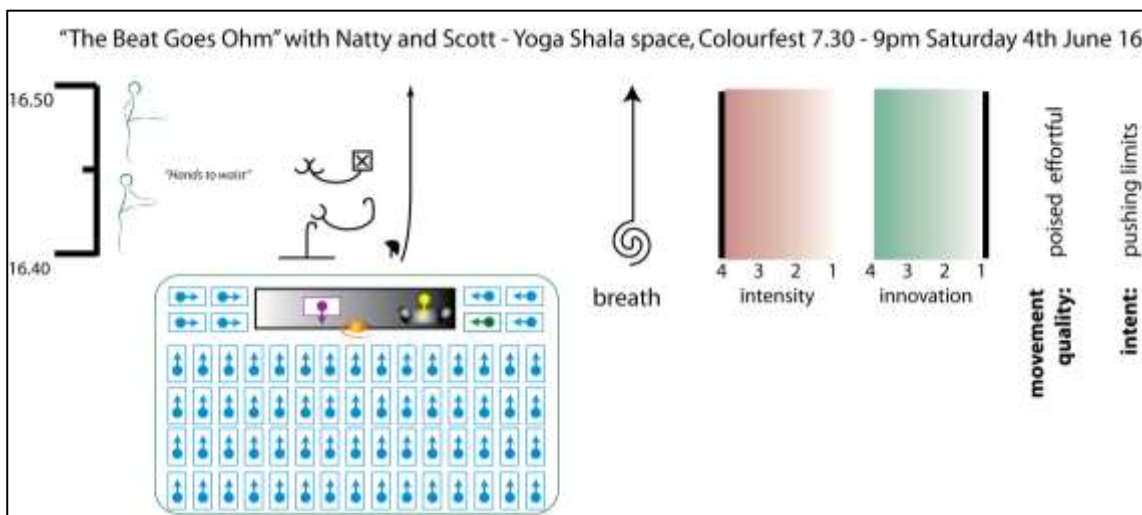


Fig. 90a. Colourfest: Struggling to an ideal



Fig. 90b. Colourfest: Struggling to an ideal

In fig. 91, taken from the same session, the teacher is more overt in encouraging diverse interpretations of an *āsana*, in this case a headstand. Again, the notation is simple, and the actuality complex. Students have been invited to exit or omit the *āsana* as necessary, in their own time, and to take up some version of the commonly practised “child’s pose”. In the photos, some are in diverse variations of that *āsana*, some sitting, some transitioning from one *āsana* to another in various ways, a few in the headstand *āsana*, and one being specifically assisted by the teacher.

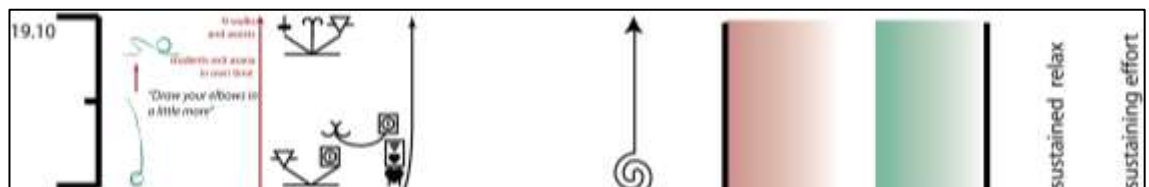


Fig. 91a. Colourfest: Adapting according to ability



Fig. 91b. Colourfest: Adapting according to ability

This example is in some ways consistent with a more authoritarian instruction style, given the prescribed movement and high levels of postural alignment. Yet even here, there is a clear

distinction between the ideal intention and diverse expressions of the practice, and in this case this diversity is acknowledged, and at times, even encouraged by the teacher. Far more experimentation in interpreting the teacher's instructions is explicitly invited in more exploratory schools such as the Scaravelli Inspired session with Amba in fig. 89.

These gaps between the teacher's output and the students' interpretation of the practice are in fact always present both in modern postural and post-lineage teaching. But in post-lineage yoga they are a feature of practice evolution, rather than a dilution of the source of the teachings. Each practitioner's own experience contributes to the group consensus in a way that is much more difficult within a set hierarchy. Here many people take turns in the role of the teacher within the same community, allowing for multiple and diverse iterations of the practice. Innovation through individualisation is encouraged among students as well as teachers. The new iterations of practice that survive are those that hold true for a critical mass of engaged practitioners.

## Hidden aspects of group teaching and shared movement

In both modern postural and post-lineage yoga, transcendent and therapeutic intentions commonly collide (Alter 2005: 119). A therapeutic model of practice aims for healing rather than correction, and thus the transmission of post-lineage yoga increasingly turns to protocols of informed consent, standardised curricula, and competency tests familiar from therapeutic professions. But for many seekers of transcendence the true self liberated by practice exists beyond any need for safety protocols, and transmission is achieved not by standardised teaching methods, but by an embodied grace of divine origin, often in the person of the guru (Jain 2012: 20). The common Hindu idea of gaining spiritual benefit through direct presence with a more realised or enlightened being casts a shadow over the resulting interpersonal power dynamics whenever yoga practice is shared in group instruction.

The guru was the historical conduit to knowledge that the student self cannot access alone, often after a long prelude of testing the student through their service to the guru. Indeed, the guru's grace even in the modern era is the conduit to a newly reformed student body in a way that appears incompatible with contemporary ideas of rational, informed consent. For Paolo Friere, "knowing [...] means being an active subject who questions and transforms" (Shor 2002: 26). In contrast, a traditional adept is, in effect, being asked to consent to an incomprehensible reconstruction of themselves as a new, even supernatural and liberated being.

But as the authority for yoga practice widens to a group of post-lineage peers, there is as yet no common discussion as to whether the group can also be a conduit to previously unknown

esoteric knowledge, becoming greater than the sum of its parts. Nor is the effect of the loss of a period of apprenticeship remarked upon. There remains no common consensus on how long a personal practice or dedication to one's own teacher is needed before sharing one's own practice with others as a teacher, although 'far more than at present' is the most commonly voiced conclusion.

Whether in teaching roles that hold inherited charisma, in verbal instructions or in physical correction, riding within the content of group instruction is the transmission of diverse unseen or implicit aspects of yoga culture. Contemporary yoga, as a practice of meaning-making, is not just instructed, but variously narrated, with meaning-making included in transmission. Within post-lineage yoga, the fluidity of authority involved in distributing the role of the teacher is also matched by the fluidity of identity that has been sustained, enacted and narrated through each teacher's individual practice. In group sessions, students are further invited to imagine themselves as other bodies, in mythical roles, or to re-enact formative experiences, as in this dance session at Sundara:

"And I want us to get really clear with who we're with and who's in the centre. It's no longer a person. We're witnessing a dance of Mother Nature. This form, these forms are extensions of all the elements. Inside this form is all the animals, all the minerals and all the stars." – Dancing the Heart Path session at Sundara

The most physical of instructions refer to metaphors of self-manifestation, self-liberation, and self-surrender, as in this movement session at Santosa:

"And again, let your knees find another pair of knees. And any time I invite this partner dancing, you are so welcome just to be on your own if that's what you need. If that's what your knees need." – Movement is Medicine session

Histories and processes of identity formation by both teacher and student are reflected in the practice of the student, and thus the perceived moral and ethical character of a teacher is part of the expert authority that justifies ongoing transmission of practice elements. When any famous teacher is accused of abusive or merely unethical behaviours, well-established practices that are used for holistic self-development both within and beyond that lineage or brand are often reconsidered (if rarely completely abandoned) in the light of new historical and biographical evidence. There are ongoing debates about postural adjustments in the light of accusations of sexual assault during Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga classes in Mysore (Taylor 2018; Smith 2018), and debates about *yoganidrā* following evidence of abuse in the Satyananda lineage (Remski 2014a). When a present or former devotee to a specific lineage has considered

the very person of the guru to be a conduit for spiritual blessings within a practice of intimate self-discovery, and bowed year on year to the imprint of their footprints in a pair of sandals, a visceral horror is provoked by allegations and evidence of their abuse. As one Satyananda Yoga teacher put it at Santosa:

“It's the denial, the heartache, the abuse, and then the initial collusion that people go through, in order to protect themselves. [...] It's devastating”

The impact of each spiritual crisis within lineage and brand forms a hidden landscape affecting the ongoing formation of post-lineage subcultures. In a statement for the Total Yoga Nidra Network following the Satyananda investigation, Uma and her partner Nirlipta wrote:

We are glad to be able to bring fearless independence, clarity, and critical and creative thinking to a practice that has often been hedged about with fears and dogma (Dinsmore-Tuli and Tuli 2018c).

The timing of this research project coincided with increasing attention being paid in transnational yoga culture to instances of abuse by teachers at all levels of reputation, as part of a wider cultural reckoning epitomised by the #metoo movement (for examples see Carlson 2017; Rain 2018). Lineage institutions, brand organisations and post-lineage affinity groups alike are struggling with such issues on an unprecedented level, and responses are fast-evolving and contested. The extent of historical or contemporary abusive behaviours by yoga teachers and gurus is thus far unclear. The extent to which any or all established yoga institutions are structurally prone to enabling it, is also unclear. Similar revelations within many other religious institutions, not least the Catholic Church, have provoked debates that could contain insights relevant to similar ongoing debates among yoga devotees (Orsi 2013: 4). There are at least two newly started doctoral research projects that will aim to address this issue. As a result, the extent to which transnational yoga organisations will be able to embed restorative justice into internal processes remains to be seen. But with open and facilitated dialogue such as that begun at YogaCity in New York (West et al. 2016), post-lineage communities might be among those “beloved communities” (Brosi 2012) in which healing from such abuses can begin.

Alongside the taught and led practice sessions, post-lineage events are organised in multiple ways that increase interpersonal entrainment: entraining visceral rhythms of activity and rest through harmonising schedules and regular communal relaxation activities such as *yoganidrā*; bringing heart and breath rates into synchrony with *bhaktiyoga*, and even sweating together in group saunas. These aspects enhance the mutual entrainment already common to any group



form of movement practice, including modern postural yoga. With a few notable exceptions, almost all contemporary yoga group sessions encourage students to move more or less in time, and that movement is synchronised to the rhythm of their breath, leading to a common entrainment to breathe in time together. When yoga teachers additionally count breaths on behalf of participants, as in fig. 92, that entrainment becomes more marked (Schuler 2011: 97).

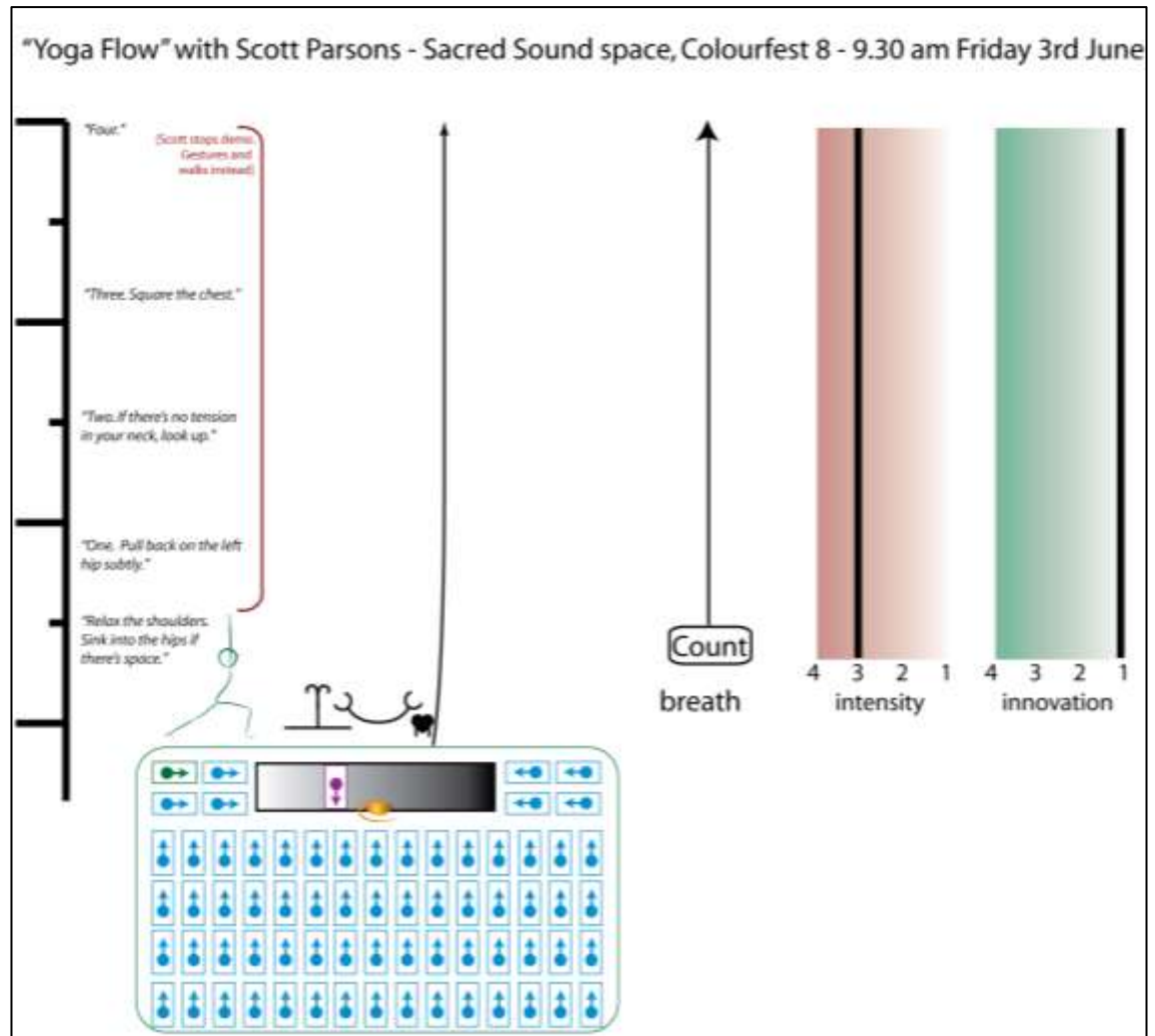


Fig. 92. Colourfest: Counting breaths for entrainment

Many yoga teachers will use varying and rhythmic intensity in the effort required of participants, to intuitively encourage shared peak or trance experiences, just as a DJ will use the rhythmic modulation of music to induce similar attunement among attendees at ecstatic raves (Takahashi 2004: 154). Each post-lineage or modern postural yoga session, to borrow from acoustic terminology, might have a stronger attack, or longer sustain to its intentional effort, and differing rates of release into savouring practices. Within the greater arc of the session may be experienced shorter modulating waves of movement sequences, just as individual chants will have their own pace and tempo within the larger *kīrtan* in *bhaktiyoga*.



The intuitive practice of structuring sessions in this way is however, once again less common among teachers who focus on invitational and individualised rather than more prescriptive and universalised experiences.

The process of developing a co-practice methodology for this thesis also provided insight for little-understood side-effects to the synchronous mimicking or repeating of physical movement that has been key to the teaching of yoga since the modern era began.

Neurological and anthropological research suggests strong links between such movement practices and group affinity (de Waal 2008: 287). As Maxine Sheets-Johnstone writes:

To move among others is to be part of an interanimate world. To move in concert with others is, as indicated, to move in harmony with them. To be able to do so is to think in movement, not just one's own movement but one's own movement in conjunction with the movement of others. (2017: 2)

Put simply, moving like others heightens empathy, which becomes especially potent in situations such as these, where other aspects of physical entrainment are also engaged, and where the common ecology has a particularly active role to play. And movements have associations beyond the setting of a yoga session. Kundalini Yoga *kriyās* are reminiscent of held stress positions (Leach 2016: 8). Certain *āsanas* were used as postural punishment in Indian schools (Hargreaves 2017).

Thus moving, eating, and breathing together can be a source of cognitive control via entrainment and association (Barsalou et al. 2005: 44). Independent of any intention on the part of instructor or instructed, moving like others, together with the attitudes that are associated with that movement, can enhance the contagion of emotion in intensive group interaction (Nummenmaa et al. 2012: 9599; Schuler 2011: 93). And although the common perception of empathy is that it is an entirely benign quality, entrainment can control, and empathy can be dangerous to either party:

To mimic somebody or something is to be sensuously filled with that which is imitated, yielding to it, mirroring it bodily. It is, Taussig claims, a powerful way of comprehending, representing, and above all controlling the surrounding world. (Bubandt and Willerslev 2015: 17)

Yoga is a practice taught and transmitted from agent to agent, body to body. Students learn to mirror and imitate the movement, even the breathing patterns of teachers, before they learn what these movements mean for them as individuals, and even whilst they are (re)creating a sustainable sense of self. Modern postural yoga is a practice built on group transmission with

little understanding of a body of research considering the risks and processes of group movement. Building from that, post-lineage yoga transmission democratises the authority for practice, but often deliberately intensifies the rhythmic and sustained entrainment of breath, heart-rate, trance states and even hormonal cycles in an inescapable field of inter-human relationality in stark contrast to the intrapersonal reconciliation of self and world involved in traditional solitary practice. In shared movement, authority is leveraged not just in direct instruction, but also through entrainment, mimesis, and sympathetic magic (Bubandt and Willerslev 2015: 19).

Group transmission of this kind involves mimicry, and therefore empathy, or it involves intuitive group entrainment, that transfers agency from the individual to the collective (Schuler 2011: 81). In both cases sensation, experience and intimacy is amplified in resonance. What keeps post-lineage yoga practitioners unrolling their mats alongside each other is as much the experiences of affinity that these processes of group entrainment offer, as the content of the teaching available. In fig. 93, attendees at Santosa curl up together for a moment of shared Laughter Yoga before dinner. In fig. 94 (over page), a Biodanza teacher at Sundara demonstrates finding a common rhythm with a partner.



Fig. 93: Santosa: Curling up for Laughter Yoga

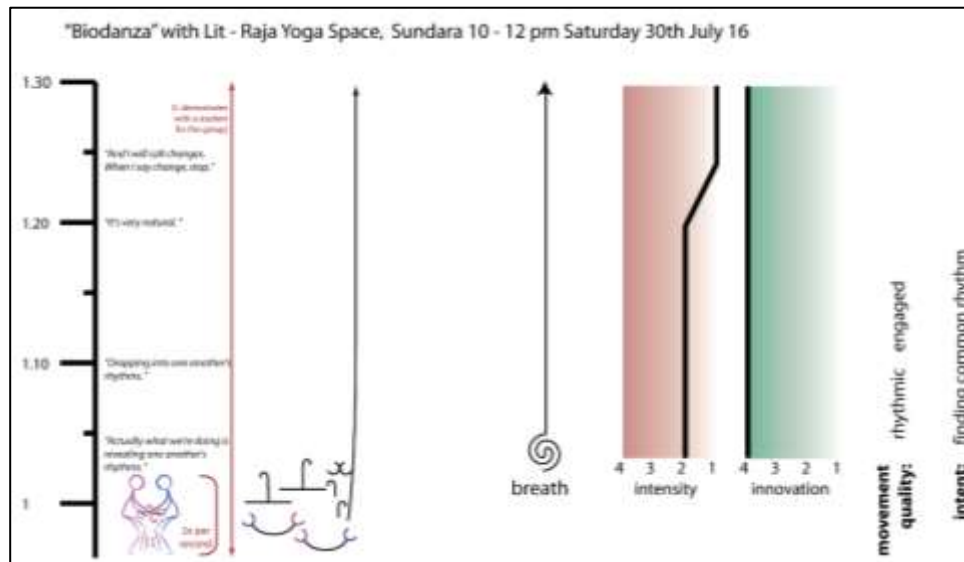


Fig. 94. Sundara: Finding a common rhythm

As she says: “Actually what we’re doing is revealing each other’s rhythms. Dropping into one another’s rhythms. It’s very natural.”

## The impact of charisma and interpersonal power on group instruction

At the point of interpersonal transmission are bodies moving together, entrained and implicated in complex power relations. In taking up the revolving role of the teacher, beyond their often-extensive formal training and experience, a teacher-practitioner relies on multiple sources of authority and charisma, and gains further cultural status from their effective performance of the same. A teacher’s value is most obviously judged by the effectiveness of their taught content, their networked position within the community, their adaptability in holding space for a diverse population in evolving circumstances, and their visible modelling of the subculture’s other ethical ideals and behaviours. This includes the practical skillsets, interpersonal connections and visible service that sustain post-lineage subculture. Whilst some key actors in the post-lineage community are charismatic and popular teachers, others are valued for their practicality, their networking, or even their habit of challenging others productively. Organisers of events often combine many of these roles. Subcultural status is confirmed by a level of perceived authenticity in the eyes of students and the consensus of the network.

Each teacher’s charisma is also the product of multiple sources of perceived authenticity. As well as deriving from length of practice and depth of study, authenticity can be signalled by physical attributes such as more-than-usual abilities and unusual neurologies that suggest the

supernatural, as discussed in Chapter 6 and exemplified by the impressive mobility and strength shown by Nicole (fig. 95, Case study 6) and Christopher (fig. 96, over page, Case study 2).



Fig. 95. Case study 6: Impressive mobility



Fig. 96. Case study 2: Impressive strength

It can also be gained through narrative strategies that mine the self for hagiographic and otherwise inspirational content for verbal teaching. In the following session at Colourfest, the teacher's voice flows hypnotically through a stream of consciousness narration of action, intent and experience.

“Find the drishti point of focus. [...] Bring equanimity into the body. [...] Finding the balance between the female and the male within the body. [...] The breath is ever-flowing. Never stop. And within that breath there is steadiness.”

Physical attributes improved by practice are also enhanced by genetic privileges such as hypermobility or strength, and the narrative content of each session by a teacher's storytelling ability, personal history and education. These two aspects meet in a frequently occurring disconnect between the effort the student has to put in to achieve a practice, and the performed calm of the teacher in narrating instruction.

Within the notation for my case studies of individual practice, I mapped my perceptions of the approximate intensity of focus and effort relative to each practice as a whole (fig. 97). The scale has a foundation in observable phenomena, from restful stillness to intense effort, and

was tested in interview, but should still be considered as a record of the *appearance* rather than the *actuality* of intensity.

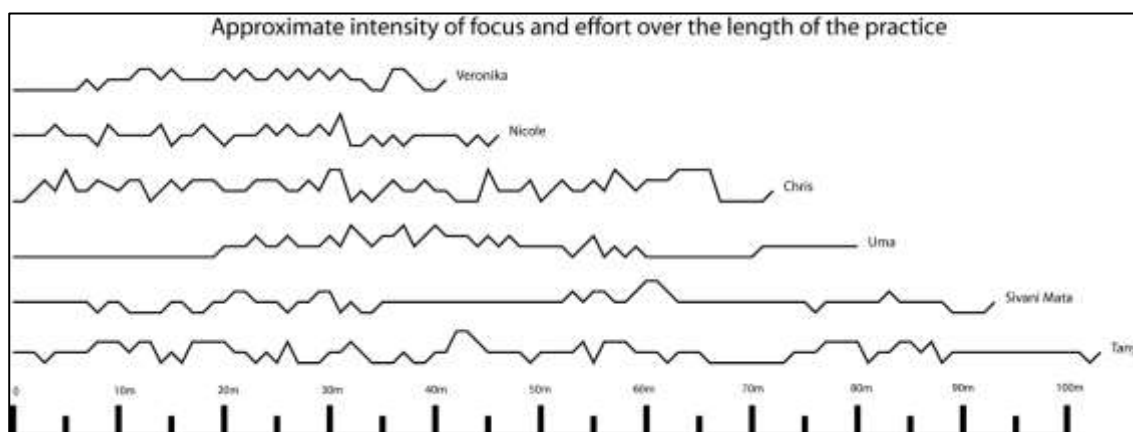


Fig. 97. Mapping approximate intensity in co-practice

I include it here, because on a number of occasions, my respondents' post-practice interpretation of apparently intense practice involved emphasising significant calm, ease and joy. As Christopher said of his own apparently intense practice in Case Study 2: "Ah, that was a gentle practice today. It was just a soft practice today". Translated to the teaching environment this means that in the mimesis and entrainment that occurs between teacher and student, when a teacher presents or models effortlessly that which the student finds effortful or challenging, the disjunction implies expertise, with the teacher's charisma subtly signalling a level of advanced competence and experience. As a result, some teachers talk of consciously making visible their mistakes and their ordinariness whilst teaching.

As I have shown, charisma is accrued in diverse ways, through both the intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences at the heart of post-lineage subcultures. Its role in subcultural transmission will become even clearer in chapters to come. Post-lineage group teaching, and indeed much of contemporary yoga teaching, involves inspiration and aspiration, modelling and enactment, charisma and catharsis. Post-lineage transmission is as semiogenetic as the individual practice it relates to. In this subculture, various talks by activists, *satsaṅga* (wisdom sharing) by religious leaders, and opportunities for *sevā* can reinforce orthodoxy, or provide much-needed hope, connection and perspective. Shared practices of *āsana*, *bhakti*, *yoganidrā* or dance, offer the mixed blessing of entrainment and emotional contagion, but are also opportunities for reconciling grief, whether at disillusionment with lineage, or more individual traumas.

In summary, post-lineage yoga teaching is a complex mix of inherited, individualised and intuited elements. It combines a repertoire of practice, some shared ethical structures and

diverse techniques. But without a coherent, shared pedagogical philosophy, the processes of reflexive self-inquiry that are used to develop individual practice are rarely used to consider the dynamics and habits of group teaching environments. Much more rarely do any yoga teachers consider how they teach, as well as what they teach. But just as post-lineage practitioners question the authority structures through which they inherited the practice, increasing numbers are beginning to question the ways in which they pass the practice on to others.

Whilst the most significant transmission innovation of yoga in the modern era may well be practising as a group, we are only beginning to understand what it means for bodies to practise yoga together. In order to build a culture of empathy that is not devoid of ethics or agency, post-lineage yoga must continue to surround transmission with an increasingly robust culture of shared ethical norms. Teaching protocols that build healthy emotional engagement and personal agency must continue to develop in response to the increased intensity of interpersonal power issues that occur in group transmission (de Waal 2012: 135).

Just as each individual practice is a unique iteration of post-lineage yoga, both inspired by and contributing to the subculture as a whole, so each teaching session is a unique iteration of transmission processes that sustain and evolve the pedagogical whole. The democratisation of authority inherent to the overall endeavour is unevenly applied, and the practice cycle imperfectly translated. Yet it is the very slippage between intention and effect, and the accumulated power of diverse sources of teaching charisma, that fuel the continuation and evolution of the practice, here at least, into a coherent subculture.



## 10. Creating a shared repertoire

As discussed in the previous chapter, the transmission of both modern postural and post-lineage yoga happens above all in group teaching environments. In modern postural yoga, the aim is to maintain a practice repertoire that is as close as possible to the perceived original wisdom of lineage, or the reproducible coherence of a brand. But in post-lineage yoga, the evolution of the shared practice repertoire is subject to the processes of both group teaching and individual practice. This chapter turns to examine the ongoing translation of new practice content from individual practitioners, to enrich the subculture as a whole.

### The transformation of charisma and personal testimony

Each practice element or approach will gain favour within the shared repertoire based not just on its transferable effectiveness, but also the charismatic framing and narrative coherence imbued to the practice by its originator. As discussed in previous chapters, the most prominent, well-loved and well-connected teachers have the greatest aura of authenticity and authority, and thus the most chance of their practices entering into the common repertoire. When narratively coherent methods for practice meet diverse bodies, any gap in effective transmission is covered by the entrainment and charisma described in Chapter 9, born in both the body and the narrative skill of the teacher. The method gains the power of a meaning-making response as described in Chapters 7 and 9 (Wujastyk 2011: 224), which in group teaching is aided by confirmation bias and efficacy by association with established teachers and epistemologies. As methods grow in popularity, the semiogenetic power of the method becomes self-sustaining. Coherent forms of practice gain a reputation along with a name, enhanced by a subcultural identity that is both dependent on, and more than, the public identity of their creators. Nonetheless, the widespread practice of not giving one's name to one's teaching style, which began with teachers such as Vanda Scaravelli and Angela Farmer, and in direct contrast to many lineages, is part of conscious efforts by some to avoid the institutionalisation of personal charisma into newly created lineages.

There is no clear divide to separate post-lineage from modern postural yoga here. Both exist on a spectrum that most often correlates standardisation, charisma, hierarchy and commercial success, with wider cultural visibility. The processes of self-inquiry and individualisation necessary for post-lineage peer networks to thrive, and the standardisation necessary for great commercial success, are often incompatible activities. But across the spectrum, in both modern postural yoga and post-lineage teaching practice, curating the narratives produced in



individual practice for hagiographic and promotional purposes is common, adapting a practice established by many guru lineages (Kripal 2001: 397; Venkatesan 2014: 568; Goldberg 2016a: 210), and consistent once again with the processes of identity maintenance described in Chapter 7.

In teaching sessions or accompanying discourses, students are frequently presented with revelations that the creator of a particular approach to practice endured suffering and social isolation, which were relieved in some way by the specific practice method. These are presented within a comprehensible narrative which the student can draw on for their own wellbeing. When the teacher presenting the method is the method's creator, the benefits of such practices for wellbeing of diverse kinds are asserted through intimate association with personal testimony. By implication, to share in such practices is to learn how to embody the qualities that the teacher models in their own practice, and to overcome one's own difficult episodes with ease. Personal testimony braids together the medical and the magical in ways that repeatedly lay claim to that mundane miracle that is an everyday life lived on the edge of possibility, and the edge of enchantment. Thus it is that:

in making sense of our experiences, we not only tell stories about our bodies, but we also tell stories out of and through our bodies. Here, the body is simultaneously cause, topic and instrument of whatever story is told (Sparkes and Smith 2011: 359).

In their retelling however, these biographies begin to be abstracted and transformed, enhancing shared repertoires with an unstable form of collected and connective memory (Hoskins 2016: 349). Abstracted personal narratives, and the borrowed testimonies of others, both become part of each teacher's repertoire, referring back to such collected histories in future teaching, overtly or implicitly re-enacting them. As a result the immediate lived experience of both students and teachers is understood, even made peace with (Joldersma 2013: 60). The more this re-echoing and re-enactment occurs, the more the newly collective, hagiographic version of the narrative is refined and universalised, but also the more it is individualised to each new person enacting the practice. In the process of dismantling the whole systems of modern postural yoga into practice elements subject to the authority of each individual practitioner, post-lineage yoga is also engaged in dispersing the charisma associated with each hagiographic practice narrative, transforming it into the meaning-making inherent in each individual repertoire.

A daily re-devotion to practice, and its regular performance for the universal witness of the student group, enables post-lineage teacher-practitioners to tell and re-tell, frame and re-frame, and attempt to reconcile the imagery of aspiration and the reality of lived experience.

The most committed students are equally invested in the outcomes of that experiment for their own self-inquiry and self-image. But that process is complicated by any commercial aspirations that continue to feed the fetishisation of heroic stories of the self, at odds with the emergent identities and iterative yet collective self-development of the lived experience of post-lineage practice. The most effective stories of post-lineage yoga are crowd-sourced and multiple, rather than brand-approved and on-message.

## The common use of appeals to science in amplifying faith

This thesis has demonstrated that for post-lineage yoga teachers, citing the authority of one's own teacher is no longer sufficient rationale alone for a particular method or approach to practice. Continuing the modern postural yoga trend identified in Chapter 2, new approaches to post-lineage practice do however, frequently appeal to scientific narratives in enhancing the authority supporting new practice content. This is particularly common when describing the subtle intelligent energies or sensations at the heart of a practitioner's lived somatic experience, to provide confidence in the ordered safety of the method on offer (Remski 2015c; Alter 2005: 135). Even *mantra* is described with a medical pun during a Japa Yoga (chanting) session at Colourfest (Singleton and Mallinson 2017: 260-1): "a mind bypass. We have heart bypass. This is a triple-mind bypass, if you're needing that."

During Sundara's opening ceremony, we are informed about a *network* of stones all over the planet installed as an "*interface* between human world and the crystalline *grid*". The grid's first message was an "*equation* of love". Within the subculture, supra-rational descriptions of 'energies' refer interchangeably to somatic experiences, frequencies of matter, personality characteristics of the human and other than human, and metaphors for tension and change. Teachers will commonly use scientific reference points and language to frame the practice as a whole, such as in Chris' description: "The individual body and its energies are a living blueprint of the structure and energies of the cosmos." (Gladwell and Wender 2014: 188).

At some point, those teachers whose teaching narratives appeal most consistently to the authority of scientific knowledge concerning biomechanics, neurology or psychology may consider more formal evaluations of their standardised methods. The content of each practice, its usefulness for one or more bodies, and its long-term sustainability, may be studied. In reality, most such practices are tested anecdotally rather than scientifically, but still inhabit an aura of scientific accuracy and authority through including scientific language or science-sounding rationales for practice choice, just as in the citation from Christopher's book above.

As referenced in the last chapter, interpersonal entrainment and the teacher-student relationship profoundly influence the transmission of contemporary yoga. And yet the most common process for evaluating the health-promoting effects of practice, consists of generalising from the teacher's narrated experience, and testing the associated practice elements with sympathetic and invested students. The supportive community of practice may provide more immediate feedback from one's peers, but further amplifies the unifying narrative, framing a method that has already lost its most critical participants (Johnson 1997: 11). If practising together involves significant empathy and entrainment, even dispersing authority from the teacher to the group cannot avoid the normative bias involved in evolving a new method or framework for practice with a sympathetic group invested in the outcome (Slee, Azzopardi, and Grech 2012: 20).

In the end, confirmation bias and groupthink is impossible to separate from the often positive and powerful effects of entrainment, placebo, and the persuasion of a good story ritually told by a teacher who truly believes in the effectiveness of a particular bodily alignment or the reality of divine grace (Rappaport 1999: 47). It is important to realise that the effectiveness of the yoga teaching relationship regardless of content may echo that of most therapeutic relationships, or indeed many medical interventions (Wujastyk 2011: 223-4; Simpkin and Schwartzstein 2016). Belief, particularly in the form of embodied knowledge, is more than a form of false consciousness (Mellor and Shilling 2010: 29). And the creation of shared belief in a useful new method is inherent to the evolution of post-lineage practices. Contemporary yoga transmission has evolved to use methods of interpersonal persuasion that uniquely rely on the large and uncertain connective spaces between scientific understandings, therapeutic interventions, self-development and faith, and in all its diverse incarnations, is inextricably enmeshed with all of these.

## The currents of authority that govern sharing post-lineage repertoires

In maintaining both sufficient space for innovation, and sufficient agreement for subcultural coherence, multiple authorities for practice choice and definition are agreed as part of the vernacular authority (Howard 2013: 80) that governs the shared practice repertoire of a post-lineage subculture. As discussed in Chapter 1, these are of three main types. The first is the external authority of the expert. Such expertise may be based in the person of a teacher, more rarely in connections to a lineage, or the popularity of a system or brand, and more commonly

in the practitioner's awareness of scholarly and scientific research. As I have just shown, these are enhanced by diverse sources of meaning-making and borrowed authority.

The second is the internal authority of the self. Each shared practice element is tested in the laboratory of multiple individual practices and experiences. Inner wisdom is a combination of experience and habitus, as well as a psychological or somatic response to a welcomed change in one's situation or condition. As I have shown, inner wisdom is impossible to entirely separate from ecology, entrainment and personal history. It remains inextricable from some influence of the teacher's own experience upon the lived experience of the student, no matter how temporarily those two roles may be assumed. As I stated in Chapter 7, the coherent inner self is as much the result as the authority for practice.

The third authority for practice is the relational authority of the group. Shared experiences and shared accounts of individualised experience both serve to either expand or confirm each person's affordances to new ways of practice, and new ways of living. But as this, and the previous chapter shows, this is complicated by the visceral and emotional reality of interpersonal relationships, resonant with the physical and narrative charisma of the teacher. It also involves a complex and co-dependent interaction between the equally necessary forces of individualisation and standardisation.

Authority structures such as these that rely on intuitive peer relationships are complex and at their worst, can be incoherent (Howard 2013: 83). It is important not to overly romanticise local movements of resistance to the perceived global forces of hierarchical authority and neoliberal commercialisation that can often be reduced to a quiet opting out, rather than active rebellion. Yet much of the resilience that post-lineage yoga does provide its practitioners relies on the freedom of association and innovation that current processes of vernacular authority represent (Howard 2013: 82). In contrast, there is no evidence that the universalised methods and standards of modern postural yoga have enabled a safer practice or more ethical interpersonal transmission, and in some cases the reverse is true. Standardisation is especially problematic in those systems that elide the significant differences between average, aesthetically ideal, and healthy bodily selves (Remski 2014c; Gilman 2014: 75).

However, as proposed in the previous chapter, post-lineage yoga might benefit from the careful importation of elements of the body of theory arising from community education and therapeutic management practices, specifically in avoiding the rise of new vertical authorities from the ground of horizontally-organised peer networks. Embracing specialised and scholarly expertise through more extensive collaboration and co-supervision would further deflate the lingering image of the isolated charismatic teacher who is expected to hold all authority over

practice and perfectly embody its most radiant results. Certainty and universalisation are the foundations of standardisation and commodification in yoga. In response, radical epistemological and ontological uncertainty in interpreting the experience of others is key to further developing the democratic, participative impulse at the core of post-lineage practice (hooks 1994: 21; Studies 2009: 15). As Paolo Freire memorably writes: “Authentic liberation – the process of humanization – is not another deposit to be made in men” (1996: 60). The life-enhancing personal experiences at the heart of each new post-lineage method cannot be simply transplanted into others by rote repetition of identical practices and narratives.

To choose to give away the semiogenetic power of narrating the experience of others and to renounce universalised models for practice is to model vulnerability for others, to empower individual students and to enhance the resilience of an intuitively evolving subculture. Teachers who release their role as expert creators of easily packaged practices become instead organisers of information, collators of diverse experience, and thus co-holders of a community tradition (Baistow 1994: 36). They can also retreat to a more pragmatic and less anxious self-image, as a good enough rather than perfect avatar of the practice.

What emerges as a result is a system of peer-networked, distributed authority in which different specialists take the role of teacher in turn, and the consensus for practice iteratively evolves between individuals. This has a fitting resonance with the experience at the heart of post-lineage practice: of an animate bodily self that coheres in real time out of multiple possible identities. But just as the self is still subject to the influence of others, so even the most horizontally-organised post-lineage teaching structures are still subject to the flow of power involved in interpersonal relationships. Charisma still accrues and must be tempered or dissipated. Indeed, some far-distant gurus and formative teachers who have died, have already become abstracted figures, talismans of authenticity, and slipped signifiers for authority. Around these centres of cultural gravity, peer groups of practitioners sometimes maintain the illusion of shared adherence to external authority whilst in practice evolving pragmatic systems of decision-making much more consistent with post-lineage authority structures.

Charisma may be inescapable in some form. Those who hold it embody the values of each learning community within the post-lineage subculture, whether that consists of the discipline to sustain intense physical focus, or the power to re-enchant the world through narrative. Just as the semiogenetic power of placebo can be understood and usefully harnessed within a health-promoting practice (Moerman and Jonas 2002: 472), so the power of charisma to induce evolution in others and provide a guiding light for the subculture can be utilised to have similar positive effects.

## Conclusion

The history of yoga transmission shows remarkable transformations in teaching methods, from one to one tuition to mass group teaching, and from a cultural and religious practice primarily aimed at teaching men right living, detachment, and even renunciation, to a largely female-led practice for health, right relationship and self-reconciliation that aims to be inclusive to as large a population as possible. Such transformations are echoed here, within the transformation of individual practices, to taught practices, to shared subcultural forms and approaches.

Governing this process is the complex tripartite authority of self, expert and group, and a growing tendency towards techniques that build agency rather than conformity among students. I have suggested some external sources that could further enhance participative and emancipatory learning processes, above all in the widespread adoption of a culture of consent in teaching. This would provide more of David Clark's "security, significance and solidarity" for the learning communities that cluster in post-lineage ecologies (1996: 109). Complicating this picture are the flows of charisma, appeals to science, and the power of faith and semiogenesis in the transmission of a practice that is as transcendent as it is therapeutic.

These flows of transmission, and thus the ongoing re-creation of the shared repertoire of post-lineage yoga rest here above all on a strong foundation provided by the culture and community supporting post-lineage yoga in Britain. In the following chapter I will explore in particular how rhizomatic development and a murmuration of ethical norms underpin the teaching and ongoing evolution of this remarkably innovative, individualised, yet subculturally coherent practice.



# 11. Culture and community

What may be most unusual about post-lineage yoga subculture as I have encountered it is the strong sense of community that holds and supports post-lineage yoga here in the UK. As I will show in this chapter, the translation of individual practice discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 into the group teaching discussed in Chapter 9, is supported by the vital community networks that sustain and support the subculture, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 8. The ongoing creation of new subcultural content, as outlined in Chapter 10, is supported by an informal network of peers and gatekeepers, a shared language for ethics and experiences, and shared histories in shared places. Post-lineage yoga subculture sustains itself above all as a community of practice (Wenger 1999: 78), a complex system in which structure is both the matrix and outcome of social relations (Sewell 1992: 27). Whilst in modern postural yoga such practice communities might also exist, they have the institutional support of lineage or brand. Post-lineage yoga has much more informal interpersonal connections to sustain. This chapter returns to those connections, and that shared subculture, and shows the close ways in which culture and community function together.

## Post-lineage yoga as a community of practice

The post-lineage community is sustained by members at different and evolving levels of engagement, including key figures who are connected not just to many members, but also to many sources of cultural inspiration, from Shakti Dance to the Naked Voice practice community. Access to the subculture is also affected by one's own social position, and multiple gatekeepers of influence: from camp organisers to owners of the land. There are schedules and role agreements, tickets to buy and expenses to be paid. Overall, however, this is a religious community that functions without more formal hierarchical and institutional structures to support transmission and evolution over time. A camp organiser at one event may volunteer at another. A teacher on the schedule of another event may run the kitchen on another occasion. This is instead a community of practice, which shares a set of cultural resources, tasks and norms. As Etienne Wenger explains,

The repertoire of a community of practice includes [...] both reificative and participative aspects. It includes the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world, as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members (1999: 83).



Each camp and event functions as a communally negotiated shared task to further cement trust in its interpersonal relationships (Wenger 1999: 78). Each event involves the repetition of evolving narratives about the history and future of particular camps, as immortalised on the Santosa website:

“As we gear up for the most fabulous Santosa Yoga and Bhakti camp ever, I felt some of you might be interested to know the inside story of how this heart-warming yoga and *bhakti* event came to be” (Dinsmore-Tuli 2013a).

The post-lineage community commonly discusses which events are growing, shrinking, or unstable. Those most central to event organisation are aware that even a well-established camp could vanish from one season to the next, if the handful of people in its organising group lose the capacity or will to continue.

“We do live fairly spontaneously I would say. And so, for us committing to doing a camp once a year and saying 'Yes that's what we're going to do' is quite challenging for us.” – Tanya talking about Sundara

Overall, however, the subculture continues to thrive because the people at its heart understand that the core task of the camps is *the making and maintenance of relationships through shared practices*. Whilst modern postural yoga is characterised by its individualism (Newcombe 2011: 218; Urban 2000: 296), the camps are replete with moments of intimate communal practice: the dances, the *bhakti* and the *pūjās*. As Rowan says of Colourfest,

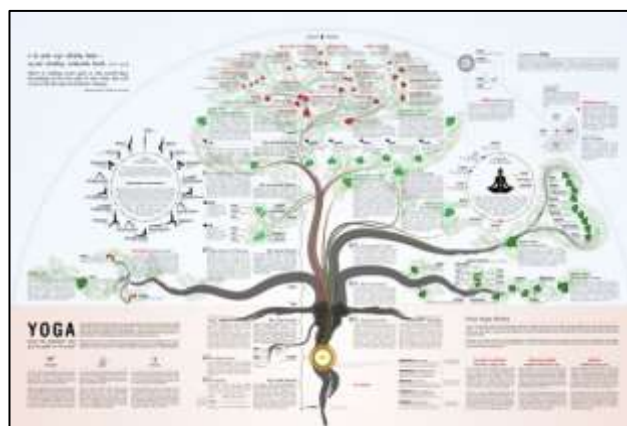
“The yoga element is the solitary, you're a solitary person on the mat by yourself. But there is another avenue for learning which is through contact and through interaction.”

It is those communal activities, rather than the more standard and popular yoga *āsana* workshops, that draw the largest proportion of key figures and gatekeepers of the subculture. But such activities resonate with both group and individual movement practices, and are part of the shared subcultural repertoire of post-lineage yoga as a regularly renewed and performed practice. Just as post-lineage *hathayoga* practice is porous to the influences of dance and *bhakti*, so also elements of the repertoire bleed into the other shared activities of the practice community.



Heartsong at Santosa, closing ritual at Sundara

Narratives of the development of modern yoga within wider yoga culture tends to employ various metaphors to describe its development. Common among these are images of trees whose branches represent the diverse schools, with a single or multiple numbers of trunks, all dependent on the wisdom of prior masters at its roots, or to the concept of a river, with many currents of practice once again all dependent on a prior source, similar to Jessica Frazier's descriptions of Hinduism (Frazier 2014: 3-4).



The history of yoga as conceived at theyogaposter.com (YogaDork 2014)

Whilst these are apt metaphors for the development of pre-modern yoga into modern postural yoga, especially with reference to the Mysore Palace era as described by Mark Singleton (2010), my use of the term post-lineage is predicated on the realisation that much of contemporary practice is now rhizomatic in development: diverse, heterogeneous, and multiply connective. Any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other (Lionel and Le Grange 2011: 745). Thinking about knowledge transmission with branching or tree-based metaphors creates “pseudomultiplicities” of variation subordinate to a central theme and source (Lionel and Le Grange 2011: 746). In contrast rhizomatic learning structures disrupt orderly transmission and propagate diversity and resilience through webs of knowledge. Thus in post-lineage yoga it is indeed communities, not individual teachers and their followers, that produce common subcultural knowledge (Neitz 2013: 60).

Whilst the large brands of modern postural yoga continue to dominate cultural imagery and thus perception, both commercial and traditional hierarchies in yoga are of decreasing importance for maintaining authority over a coherent form of practice. Instead, that coherence comes directly from the communities of practice described here, taking their inspiration in turn from the *samghas* and ashrams that quietly inspired and supported each guru and charismatic teacher of their original lineage. It may be that similar communities played a much larger role in the evolution of yoga than guru hagiographies suggest (Kripal 2001: 397).

Just as post-lineage instruction includes common appeals to the ‘heart as inner teacher’ in each student, so the subculture as a whole is theoretically dependent on the authority of every teacher at the centre of a class. Yet in reality their authority in turn depends on their networked connection to the rest of the subculture, and their ability to hold a participative space for the learning community of each class, just as the ‘inner teacher’ is an emergent property of the multiple voices and histories of the self. This is a significant evolution from the traditional ideal of the teacher who draws from the authority of their own teacher, in a generational hierarchy reaching back to a single, unifying lineage source for authority. Michel Bauwens uses a more digital metaphor for such newly emerging social structures, in an online manifesto for “peer to peer” spirituality. As he writes:

What is important here is not to see spiritual achievements like ‘enlightenment’ as transcendent qualities that trump all others and infer an unchallengeable authority on one person, but rather as particular skills that deserve respect [...] That means no more gurus, just skillful teachers with a particular job to do. (Bauwens 2014)

From without, the patterns of growth and change of a rhizomatic subculture are much harder to distinguish without a significant investment in ethnographic study. In this research, each camp, and each camp activity has a different configuration of gatekeepers, key figures, and thus the authority to determine or narrate meaning for post-lineage yoga practice as a process of coherent subcultural ritual (Grimes 1995: 328). This includes the taught sessions, which can be more or less invitational or authoritarian and involve the rotation of people into the role or seat of the teacher, but also includes cooperative, performative, and improvisational activities at all the camps, designed to create a collective body with agency distributed among its members (Da’oud 1997: 74-5).

Rhizomatic development is diverse, often chaotic, but profoundly resilient, as it is never dependent on a single person, group, brand or lineage for survival (Lionel and Le Grange 2011: 746). This is in contrast to the majority of modern postural yoga. The narratives of the most

dominant brands trace their roots back to Krishnamacharya as a common ancestor in the early twentieth century developments of the Mysore Palace, and are dependent on the enduring reputation of each teacher or guru that links them to that point. As I have shown, for numerous practitioners, the shift to a post-lineage model for practice comes in response to the failure of one or more links in that lineage chain due to personal or institutional scandal. In post-lineage yoga, each teacher, each event crew, each small association of a handful of devotees or practitioners, holds their own roots, whilst also recognising that they are stronger by association with many others.

Nonetheless, this metaphor conceals an even more complex reality. For the patterns of association, interdependence, and growth in a rhizomatic authority structure are never entirely free from interpersonal power. The rhizomatic learning communities of post-lineage yoga are affected by evolving currents of role power as discussed in Chapters 9 and 10, and strongly influenced by interpersonal affinity. The enlightened exchange of useful practices also depends on visceral contact between members moving together, struggling together, liking and loving each other.

Subcultural events are promoted above all in virtual spaces. Promotional films are shared on YouTube, evolving schedules and ticket sales are handled on event websites, and overlapping sub-communities keep in touch throughout the year via Facebook pages and groups.



Colourfest: Facebook page, YouTube film and website



Sundara: Facebook page, group and website



Santosa: Facebook group, page and website with embedded YouTube film

However, these virtual activities would not survive without the events themselves, which are dependent on both shared ecology, and an intimate physicality. The relationships that result are diversely intimate, and interpersonal conflict inevitably arises on occasion (Wenger 1999: 77). In common with many new religious movements, post-lineage norms include privileging fairness to others, equanimity and also honesty, which can be difficult to balance when publicly discussing private conflicts (Ridout 2008: 18). Of the dispute that led to John and Tanya leaving Santosa, Uma says “they brought their whole ex-rave festival vibe. Sorted it out. [...] and then needed to go on and do their own thing.” And John and Tanya agree, saying: “I’m one of those people that will brush myself off and start again” (Tanya) and “I’m quite happy to walk away because I know we could always recreate what we did anyway” (John).

Off-site, like many such informal communities, the subculture also propagates itself through discretely passionate romances, hidden disputes, injuries, illness and quietly broken friendships. New liaisons spark creative collaborations. When organisers fall out or are unable to continue, break away groups start new events. Post-lineage yoga camps are a clear example of contemporary ritualised social gatherings, and as such are as complex and carnal (Olaveson 2004: 88) as they are idealistic.

## The role of place and negotiated relationships to space

Post-lineage transmission, then, travels not just through individual and shared practice, but also through the messiness and enduring inequality of human relations (Spivak 2008: 78). It is also held in space: emplaced within the various spaces of its group events (Tweed 2006: 97). The larger, key events of its camps are echoed by many more and smaller events across the country, as each teacher leads winter retreats and weekly classes, and each *bhakti* musician holds gatherings around holy days and holidays.

At the camps themselves, the syncretism of post-lineage practice is actively encouraged, through the porousness of spaces and thus the osmotic nature of inspiration. This is enhanced through the increasing numbers of collaboratively led sessions, in which teachers take advantage of the chance to improvise together. Post-lineage transmission and practice is characterised by contingency and adaptiveness, further encouraged by the ecology. Whilst big brands and established lineages are more likely to teach in regular spaces which they control, in the camp environment part of a teacher's social capital is determined by their willingness and ability to adapt to circumstance and place. This is more than a pragmatic advantage. Adaptiveness is related to exploration, and the skilful exploration of new experiences is a lauded intention, as seen in this critique of modern postural yoga by Uma:

"One of the things that's happened with contemporary yoga practice is that the spectrum's got narrowed down. You don't get the full spectrum of the experience because you always do it in a certain way because you've always been taught to do it in a certain way, and there's no exploration. That's why it's nice to take the kit away, or you add in kit, you add in props."

Camp people are also ambulant people. They walk to connect, weaving the camp in unpredictable moments of meeting and greeting on the land, forming and repairing their affinitive networks like the indigenous communities described in Tuck-Po (2008: 24). Those walking feet change the land in turn, like the woodland floor at Colourfest described in Chapter 9. Bodies are ever meeting here, and are each intimate to the conception, construction and maintenance of space (Knott 2009: 156; Tweed 2006: 82). The land of the camps is responsive to the people that walk it, and the relationship is marked by agency at both ends (Harvey 2006: 27).

The rhizomatic fabric of interpersonal affinity and authority here includes other than human persons (Ingold 2016: 64). Nature is intra- as well as interpersonal, and each individual's inner authority of the heart is in fact a consensus of internal selves that the very notion of inner authority seeks to unify. The aim of all this practice is the reconciliation of the internal and external sacred living landscape as one, but also in community with other reconciled beings. As one teacher put it, in an Earth Dance session at Colourfest:

"Your centre is connected to the cosmos. [...] And then everything else can happen around this very calm, connected centre."

Thus each camp, as an instance of ritualised, enacted and emplaced practice (Grimes 1995: 228), entails a mutual exchange of practice that transforms the subcultural resources that it

shares, in an unending process with no true origin point. Multiple evolving, self-reconciling individuals take turns to step into the role of leading change just as members of some flocks of birds will take turns taking point. Sometimes the subculture moves like a murmuration (Goodenough et al. 2017), and other times like a migration flight (Voelkl and Fritz 2017), but a post-lineage subculture in which hierarchy became fixed would cease to be *post*-lineage at all.



A murmuration (RSPB 2018), and a migration flight (Ruppenthal 2015)

Those at the heart of the subculture may retain a connectedness to specific lineages and traditions, but their rootedness is also rhizomatic to each other, and emplaced, in the land (Pye 2013: 249). One teacher at one camp repeated a phrase from a teacher of their own: “It’s just an excuse to all be in the same room together”. But in this case, that room is a field, meadow, country park or copse that is also a significant member of the meeting.

Whilst transnational yoga culture continues to debate the tension of authority and ownership between ideas of ‘India’ and ‘the West’ (Long 2014: 126; Beckerlegge 2011: 41; Jain 2014b: 429), post-lineage yoga camp subculture here both complicates and partly reconciles that division, because it is in the process of developing a form of practice, of transmission, and therefore of authority, that is uniquely emplaced. It adapts dawn fire rituals to frosty conditions at the Beltane Bhakti Gathering. It flows osmotically through canvas walls at transient camps. This is a form of yogic cultural capital based as much in one’s ability to manage land and people, as the length of your lineage.

Post-lineage practice here is part of both emplaced and trans-locative transformations of modern postural yoga. It is connected to living places and a local, particularly countercultural heritage. But it is equally connected to post-colonial struggles and diverse transnational responses to late stage, neoliberal capitalism. It is, like most contemporary religious subcultures, not only drawing from multiple and diverse roots, but both “dwelling” and “crossing” (Tweed 2006: 74).

## Cultural evidence of the countercultural heritage

Within my literature review, I sketched the outline of a self-evident but little-researched network of countercultural engagements with yoga, which is transmitted through mutual inspiration and philosophical coherence, more often than the direct transmission of practice. Wider yoga culture continues to trade on the life choices and writing of such diverse radical cultural activists as Gandhi, Thoreau, Yeats and Crowley (Godrej 2012: 437-8; Harding 2006: 10; Urban 2004: 724), although actual engagement in countercultural practices for most contemporary yoga practitioners may be much rarer (Jain 2014a: 46). Just as these were not isolated figures, but formed an ideological lineage of mutual reference, so key teachers and texts within post-lineage yoga continue to take similar inspiration in developing countercultural inspiration from local historical figures. In *The Celtic School of Yoga* a “hidden lineage” of “radical” Anglo-Celtic practitioners and poets is described, inspired both by yoga and each other:

*Yogis* [male practitioners] from this hidden lineage include WB Yeats and his boyhood hero, Henry David Thoreau, writer, eco-activist and advocate of civil disobedience. *Yoginis* [female practitioners] include the Irish educator and campaigner for Indian independence and women’s rights, Sister Nivedita, and writer and philosopher Annie Besant (Dinsmore-Tuli and Harrison 2015: 98, italics in the original).

Instead of the common pattern of re-interpreting citations by countercultural figures to support cultural norms, post-lineage subculture here in Britain is part of what Robert Orsi calls “a great refusal”, in this case rejecting both patriarchal and dominant lineage structures, commercialised modern postural yoga, and indeed, neoliberalism in general (2012: 154). Here the overlap between the personal and the political, the social and the natural, are consciously explored as part of the same world (Ingold 2011: 31).

Post-lineage yoga here also inherits some of its more eclectic practice influences from British countercultural experimentations of the sixties and seventies, including therapeutic esoterica based on core shamanism (Harvey 2006: 142) and Tantric sex-magic (Urban 2004). Whilst “for Crowley and his students, sexual magic offered a powerful source of transgression” (Urban 2004: 669), shamanic, sensual and magical practices have since been domesticated as processes of personal development (Urban 2000: 280). Post-lineage yoga subculture deliberately transgresses contemporary neoliberal norms instead through the variously applied ethics of non-consumption and non-transactionality, as well as actions in solidarity with migrants and other vulnerable groups described below, and elsewhere in this thesis.



Furthermore, original countercultural movements survive in Britain that some scholars have declared finished, including that of Osho (Urban 2000: 291). Devotees from the UK Osho Leela Centre hosted the 2016 Beltane Bhakti Gathering, and led a workshop at Colourfest 2016 on the theme of 'Reclaim Your Power'. Osho Leela is also one of the few spaces outside of the Art of Living community that is exploring substance-free yoga-rave hybrids (Jacobs 2017; Jacobs and Wildcroft 2017) at their Puravida Wild Weekender events. And diverse forms of dynamic meditation and ecstatic movement are no longer "uniquely Rajneeshian" (Urban 2000: 290), if they ever were, and are in fact a common feature of post-lineage yoga events here. There are sessions labelled 'Dance into connection' and 'Bhajans and medicine songs' (Colourfest 2016), 'Bhaktiyoga Movement' and 'Dance Mandala' (Santosa 2016), and 'Drumming for Deep Listening Meditation' and 'Yoga and Shamanic Meditation' (Sundara 2016). The subculture has also inherited aesthetics and members from both the European free festival scene (Worthington 2004: 29-30), and the early independent rave scene, which themselves made free use of Hindu and Buddhist religious elements. Finally, in ritual practice, especially an emphasis on the care of *mūrtis*, Santosa in particular recalls not just Hindu practice, but very similar altar maintenance within the nearby Glastonbury goddess worship community (Whitehead 2008: 182).



Glastonbury's White Spring ('The White Spring' 2018); Bhakti Temple, Santosa

Whether casual participants are conscious of it or not, this countercultural heritage is part of the fertile soil of post-lineage yoga in Britain, and its places and people continue to fertilise its growth. They are part of providing the means and boundaries for change, many of the methods practitioners adopt, and some of the shared language that the subculture speaks (Shor 2002: 35).

## An overview of subculturally shared norms and language

The shared language of post-lineage subculture primarily concerns experiential qualia and ethical debate. As I have pointed out, the naming of *practice forms* is uneven and imprecise.

Each teacher's *sūrya namaskāra* postural sequence is subtly different. It is instead in the naming of *experience*, and thus in the naming and comparing of visceral and esoteric qualities that post-lineage yoga seeks common alignment (Tweed 2006). Typologies drawn from the audit phase of the practice cycle borrow Tantric, Vedic, Ayurvedic, medical, Theosophical and pagan terms. These evolve in the process of transmission, as they colour and narrate the moments of transmission itself.

Elements such as earth and fire, *kapha* and *pitta*, name qualities of interoceptive and sensory experience that recall the physical sensations of hot or cold, still or mobile. To these primal concepts are added evolving terms for compression and expansion, rising and falling, union and separation, clean and toxic, and so on. The movement between any of these poles in exploration and reconciliation is a pulsation that can be used to explore trance, rhythm and dance. And the negotiation of external to internal experience involved in transferring objective to subjective qualities demonstrates that interoception is also relatable to shared experiences. We might disagree on the exact shape of *mālāsana* (a deep squat), but we can intuitively share the experience of pressure in the hip joints, of heaviness in the feet. Thus transmission is possible between one lived body and another (Leledaki and Brown 2009: 313), by making shared sense of such instructions, even though they relate to an internal landscape only discovered through personal experience. In this example, the yoga teacher leading the women's sauna session at Santosa leads participants in connecting to the cleansing potential of fire, through the sensation of sunlight on the skin:

"Just feel that energy of the sun. We are giving thanks to the sun. And we're connecting with that heat, with that fire. It's the heat of the fire that is the medicine in the tradition. With that heat, that fire, that helps us to cleanse. To let go of toxins but also to let go of thoughts, to let go of fears."



Women's sauna session at Santosa

Much of this typological matrix remains intuitive and unconsciously held. As a result, as I have proposed, it is the slippages between one person's experience and another's that serves to evolve and diversify the practice, as the student's lived experience of the practice produces

subtly different qualitative elements to that of the teacher, or the practitioner alone finds practice variations that for them, more reliably reproduce the qualitative effect intended in group practice.

Shared ethical and behavioural norms are achieved through debating yogic concepts such as Patañjali's *yamas* and *niyamas*, and *dharma* and *karma* references drawn from the *Bhagavad Gītā*. In all cases, these use diverse modern translations consistent with a long history of adaptive reuse of the *Yoga Sūtras* and other texts in accordance with cultural evolution both in India and abroad (Birch and Hargreaves 2016; Freschi and Maas 2016: 19). Alistair Shearer's translation is one of a number that are commonly found on yoga teacher training reading lists. It lists the *Yoga Sūtras*' five "rules for living" for example, as simplicity (*śauca*), contentment (*saṃtoṣa*), purification (*tapas*), refinement (*svādhyāya*) and surrender to 'the Lord' (*īśvarapraṇidhāna*), preceded by Patañjali's five "laws of life" as nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), integrity (*asteya*), chastity (*brahmacarya*), and nonattachment (*aparigraha*) (Shearer 2010: 107-8). Contemporary interpretations are more likely to substitute "sexual responsibility" for *brahmacarya* (Remski 2012: 108), or gloss *īśvarapraṇidhāna* as "wholehearted dedication to the Divine" (Devi 2010: 170).

Thus, one teacher at Santosa describes how she addressed an episode of stress and anxiety by cleaning up her diet and increasing her exercise routine, a purifying practice for which she uses the Patanjalian concept of *tapas*: "So I started running in the morning to try to burn it through. [...] Get a bit of *tapas* going."

The diverse standpoints that result from these adaptations are more than mistranslations. They apply the borrowed authority of some of yoga culture's most revered texts to share experience and to inspire ethical ideals that sit between contemporary norms and pre-modern tradition. Their shifting meanings can both encourage debate and obscure difference. In superficial discussion, consensus on the importance of integrity is easily found. Deeper debate reveals the diverse ways that single term, *asteya*, can be interpreted.

Commonalities in language, ethics and other norms hide a great deal of diversity in individual interpretations and experiences. Single terms such as *kapha* and *pitta*, or integrity and truthfulness, contain a constellation of meanings. If the authority structure of post-lineage yoga is increasingly rhizomatic in nature, the norms and language that surround both practice and convention are best served by another natural metaphor introduced above: the flocking or murmuration of birds. The flock shares a larger intention, but each individual finds their own route forward, whilst simultaneously ensuring that they do not stray too far from the group.

The ongoing debate on the meaning and application of language and ethics within post-lineage yoga serves to continually check each person's distance from the whole. And the shared norms that result are an aggregate of the whole, flowing together. Whilst flocking is here used to illustrate the sharing of both behavioural norms and practices of movement, it is vital to remember that flocking, whether by birds in flight, fish in shoals or any number of other examples of similar emergent behaviour, depends on shared physical presence and entrainment (Schuler 2011: 81). Flocking is an activity done with the body: an instinctive, moment to moment evaluation of the comfort and discomfort of proximity and distance, of choice and mimicry, of safety and innovation, between the group and the individual (Goodenough et al. 2017: 14). Once again, post-lineage yoga, as both network and subculture, appears unsustainable without significant shared physicality and emplacement.

## Subcultural efforts to remain radical

As I have explained, post-lineage yoga practice is not inherently a pro-revolutionary political activity. As I showed in Chapter 5, some practitioners who are committed to ideals of social justice and service work, find the term 'radical' elitist because it assumes some people's life choices to be superior to others, as Rowan explains. However, the individual practice of post-lineage yoga and other forms of mindful movement and stillness can be a natural support for politically radical activities and identities (Rowe 2015; Schnabele 2013: 148). The practice of post-lineage yoga is an incrementally transformative activity, and the power of post-lineage practice is commonly considered to be inherent to the practice, not just the effort of commitment, as in the medieval origins of *hathayoga* itself (Birch 2011: 548).

Post-lineage camps are zones of proximal development and liminality, in which the support of the group enables the evolution of each individual (Junker 2013: 168). Within the scope of this research however, it is not possible to be certain whether attendance at post-lineage events encourages the more disparate pool of casual attendees to live a significantly more reflective, collectivist, or activist life. Indeed, some commentators on the "therapeutic turn" strongly suggest the contrary (Apperley, Jacobs, and Jones 2014: 727).

There is an evident gap between the intentions of casual attendees and the committed practitioners and expert learners described in this research. Yet as I wrote in Chapter 9, some of the more radical innovations in teaching post-lineage practice concern the development of participant agency, as well as their self-awareness. In some teaching sessions at the camps, participant bodies are encouraged to be self-aware, and self-accepting, but also to build strength, resistance and transformative power, as in the Kundalini Yoga session led by Tanya at

Sundara, in which she says: "Try not to move a muscle. We are building nerves of steel" (fig. 98).

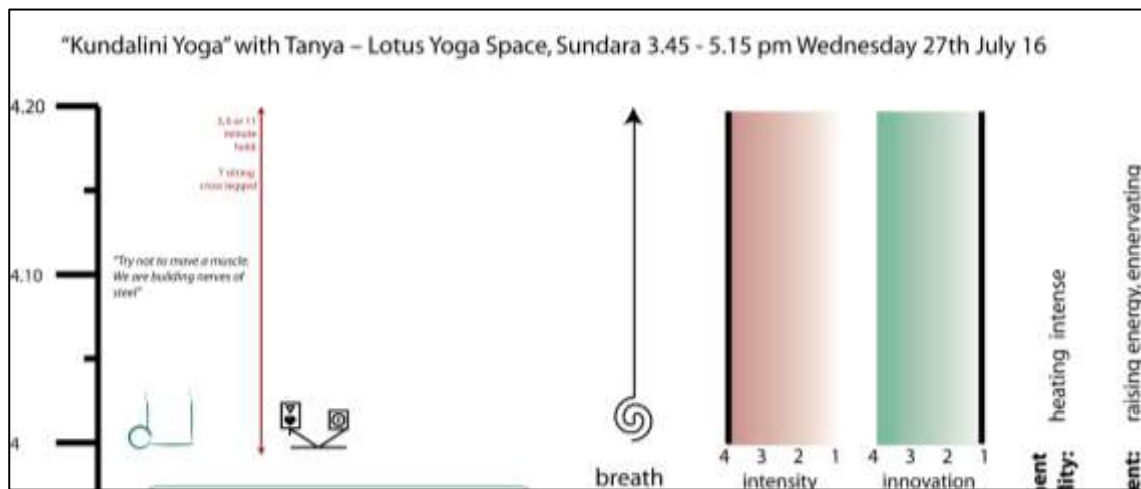


Fig. 98. Sundara: Building nerves of steel

Coming together at camps and other events is experienced by many teachers as entering into a space of sanctuary and nourishment, set against the significant stressors for anxiety and exhaustion found in wider culture. The use of wellbeing practices by the individual is a culturally sanctioned response to socio-politically elevated levels of anxiety and a “beleaguered self” (Apperley 2014: 738). But for contemporary yoga teachers, one significant source of such stress is the competitive market sanctified by abundance and prosperity doctrines that permeate the teaching of commercial modern postural yoga, as described early in its development by Paul Heelas (1993: 107), and discussed by many yoga commentators, including teacher Kimberley Johnson (2011). Yoga teaching can demand a significant investment of emotional labour into the student body, and its providers are, in the majority, women. The nature of the emotional labour involved is professional and therapeutic in nature (Wharton 2009: 152), without, as discussed in this thesis, any significant structures for peer or managerial support. Yoga teachers and allied independent therapeutic professionals are often part of the precariat of the emotional labour force (Savage et al. 2013: 230; Standing 2011: 3).

Advice available to struggling yoga teachers in a transnational, freelance market is exemplified by this affirmation-heavy and exhausting advice found in a blog post of “steps to success for new yoga teachers” from 2015,

Take one small action every day that moves you closer to manifesting your intention. Have the courage to say yes. [...] Unless you’re legitimately underqualified, say yes anyway. Maybe you’ll get a desperate last-minute call to sub a world-famous yoga teacher’s class of 100-plus students. This is the universe offering you the motivation to

tap into your deepest potential to fill some big shoes. Affirm yourself. Repeat after me: I am calm. I am confident. I am worthy. I am wise. [...] Add affirmations to squelch your own limiting thoughts, and repeat them daily. (Levasseur 2015)

And in response to a 'Google Doodle' commemorating the birth of BKS Iyengar in 2015 (fig. 99), Matthew Remski writes mournfully of the encroachment of the digital and virtual world upon wider contemporary yoga culture:

Globalized postural yoga and the high-tech world are entrepreneurial and cosmopolitan. They are endlessly positive explorations of patterns that erase as much as they create. [...] And the guru-doodle, as cute as a bendy toy the grandkids would love, does his *āsana* in an empty white field reminiscent of the minimalist, post-industrial spaces in which studio culture was born in the early 1990s. (Remski 2015a)



Fig. 99. 'Google Doodle' of BKS Iyengar (Laughlin 2015)

For the committed community of my research, post-lineage community events are spaces of temporary autonomy and solidarity deliberately removed from such pressures. For many they are also places in which they can build resistance and resilience, and model alternative and intentional structures of community and exchange. Often, these experiments in alternative living are consistent with a longer personal history of countercultural engagement. Within these camps are many former ravers whose highly illegal journeys of personal transformation through psychoactive substances led to yoga as a substance-free alternative (Takahashi 2004: 155), as in the example below. They now teach to enable the same change in others.

"I used to be drinking, taking drugs and I used to go to all the free festivals. [...] That summer, another girl that was doing this [yoga teacher] training with me, she said - 'You want to come to Buddhafields festival. It's alcohol free, drug free'" – yoga teacher at Sundara

Among both camp volunteers and the free kitchens of Calais are activists who came of age camping out at nuclear installations, and established members of eco-housing co-operatives. They join those who raised families at less-than-legal encampments such as Tipi Valley, and

more transient figures who survived governmental repression of the New Age traveller lifestyle, like the activist that Ian describes below.

“She's hardcore. And she's a traveller. That's what her history is, living on the road, and living as a traveller or on sites all her life in Holland or all about the place.”

They are joined by, and encourage solidarity with, more recent movements for protest and socio-political change, in the form of anti-fracking and oil-pipeline protesters, non-governmental and even non-NGO refugee crisis workers, and those involved in road blockades and hunger strikes to protest climate change and the new runway at Heathrow. The numbers of those engaged in the most unlawful and health-endangering of these activities may be small. But a surprising number of people I spoke to had equally countercultural episodes to recall, and the subculture as a whole is greatly supportive of both anti-establishment politics and non-violent direct activism.

The spread of socio-political information within socially distributed knowledge systems such as these (Lionel and Le Grange 2011: 750) is uneven. It is increasingly complicated by asymmetric, fragmented and opaque information sharing structures in online communities, as discussed in an opinion piece by David Auerbach (2015). From private and public health to environmental pollution, countercultural activism is based both in scientific consensus and conspiracy theories (Crockford 2017: 178).



‘Yoga classes for Syria’ in Stroud, Standing Rock benefit album, both organised by members of the subculture

Whilst it is clear that post-lineage yoga subculture is part of the survival of British counterculture, these events may however be less effective at deepening its involvement among those whose encounters with alternative lifestyles are more superficial. In many sessions, teachers make reference to figures such as Thoreau and Gandhi, whose work drew on the idea of yoga in the sense of discipline and practices of harmonious living. They also

commonly draw on the work of more recent activists such as Joanna Macy (1998), Charles Eisenstein (2008) and Micah White, whose recent book is an exploration of revolutionary tactics that encourages “a spiritual understanding of revolution” (White 2016: 43) and describes protest as any form of social ritual that in becoming contagious, has the potential to give birth “to a revolutionary movement” (White 2016: 66). One idea with growing traction within this form of activism is that of pre-pledged differential commitment, in which the majority of participants promise to undertake a supportive role to those involved in more serious risk-taking, as described by this activist, who campaigns at a number of post-lineage events.

“It's possible to design escalation strategies by thinking about very clearly what you're trying to win and achieve, make it achievable and you might have some people who are willing to give a lot and some people medium amounts and people less in terms of risking arrest or [the] time they're going to spend on it” – activist from Compassionate Revolution

At post-lineage events, the attempt to widen participant engagement in social change to casual and less countercultural attendees is thus made through multiple overt and indirect transmission methods. At the Beltane Bhakti Gathering, all attendees were encouraged to experiment with cold showers and smaller food portions, as a way to explore the event's theme of “consuming less and contributing more”. Speakers from social justice campaigns including Compassionate Revolution were a daily feature at Sundara. On a more pragmatic level, at Santosa's morning meetings new arrivals were taught how to squat and use a compost toilet. At the more mainstream end of engagement, Colourfest balances the comfort of its attendees with the ecological conscience of its organisers, as far as budgets and expectations will allow. At all the events, campaigning messages are deliberately delivered in spaces when as many attendees as possible are present, such as in chai shops, or before highly-anticipated activities.

Significant numbers of long-term attendees at the camps share stories of coming to post-lineage events as a gateway activity to substantial personal life changes. These often include giving up mainstream employment or moving into an alternative community. More casual attendees are often as content to embrace organic, vegan, collectively produced food for a week, as they are to exchange it for the convenience of the supermarket as soon as they leave. Post-lineage camps provide an immersion into entrainment, and thus empathy, and an introduction to post-lineage norms and behaviours which are often at odds with contemporary society. It provides access to conversations with established activists, and the opportunity to



engage in low-risk, entry-level political actions. Whilst the heart of the community maintains often surprisingly revolutionary social and political ideals, it is less clear whether the basic skills of interoception and self-audit, and the repertoires which are most often shared in post-lineage camp *teaching*, effectively train participants in a way that empowers *political* discernment, or *political* enactment.

## Conclusion

That supportive local network that contributes to the strong sense of community that holds and supports post-lineage yoga here in the UK may be unique. It functions in many ways to support the continuing evolution of both teaching and subcultural transmission. The peer networks involved are both coherent and resilient, and support a range of levels of engagement by participants, whilst supporting a large core of committed community members. Camps and similar events serve as both an introduction to the subculture and vital ongoing support for key members. Although cultural capital is affected by personal charisma, and interpersonal conflict occurs, these have positive benefits also, in the form of transformational power for transmission and subcultural propagation respectively. This community of practice is supported by a common language for experience, and for ethical norms, which enhance transmission and partially counteract the solipsistic tendencies inherent in this strongly interoceptive practice.

The subculture is informed by its history, and by the shared places of its events, which also shape both practice and transmission in significant ways. That history includes the continuance of a British counterculture that many researchers have declared defunct. How far post-lineage yoga as a practice, set of teachings, and subculture, can provide a more widespread entry into new forms of activism, and new forms of communal and ethical living, remains to be seen. For post-lineage yoga to develop a practice that promotes ever more equitable inter-relationship, it will need to embrace even more diversity (Foldy 2004: 533), and further develop practices that shift each person's identity from dominant mainstream norms to a greater alignment with marginalized populations (Hooks 1989: 21). This means the inclusion of more challenging post-colonial and non-neurotypical narratives, bodies and identities, (Gaard 2001: 19) and narratives that include wider than human perspectives, whilst still providing its core constituency with experiences of nourishment and sanctuary (Steinberg and Shildrick 2015: 16). It implies ever remembering that the land on which it thrives is not a silent, nurturing partner to our endeavours, but a fully realised agent and actor (Bennett 2002: 69). It includes developing practices that "build nerves of steel" and train bodies for active, non-violent

resistance, but also the increasing exploration of yoga *āsana* among populations of aging, grieving, traumatised and disabled bodies.



## 12. Conclusion

### The emergence of the term ‘post-lineage yoga’

With this thesis I set out to provide a vivid portrait of a living subcultural practice that was largely invisible, and to centre an investigation into contemporary yoga on those perhaps most invested in its continuing transmission: yoga teacher-practitioners. To do justice to the understudied phenomenon that is the bodily practice at the heart of this subculture, I created entirely new methodological tools, including a new notation structure and the co-practice method. In the process of my research I uncovered a vibrant, diverse, and locally embedded, vernacular religious form. But my analysis also detailed the intra- and interpersonal processes supporting that subculture. It has become clear that those processes are much more widespread than I initially suspected.

Both the subculture described here, and the processes that determine its ongoing creation, are herein given a new label: post-lineage yoga. That label, created in the course of my research, generates new analyses of the phenomena by focusing attention on the interpersonal, and on the actual mechanisms of developing, sharing and teaching yoga that have, to a large extent, been absent from previous research. The processes that generated the new label also required the development and testing of a methodology which provides a new lens of understanding that allows post-lineage processes to become visible. As a result, the specific conclusions and the methods employed in this thesis should inspire and enable further research in re-evaluating other such transmission processes within the wider history of teaching yoga. This concluding chapter elaborates on these matters of analysis, methods and implications.

It is also significant, as noted earlier, that the label “post-lineage yoga” is already being discussed, debated, and used to apply to subcultures outside of my research by practitioners themselves: first used publicly by J Brown (2017a, 2017b), discussed with David Lipsius of Yoga Alliance (Lipsius and Wildcroft 2018), and referenced by Peter Blackaby (2018b), among many others. This thesis has much to offer individual practitioners in understanding their own processes of practice and teaching. As its findings become more well-known, this term is also increasingly provoking more communal debates, not least among the specific community profiled in this research. Such group discussions are enabling a shared recognition by post-lineage subcultures of the activities that sustain them.

Personal communications with well-known writers on contemporary yoga culture, such as Carol Horton (2018), and Jacqueline Hargreaves (2018b) suggest that the term post-lineage

yoga is also an extremely useful one to think with for scholars and other commentators in Yoga Studies. With this term, both scholars and practitioners will be able to focus on interpersonal relationships as the most definitive aspect of post-lineage yoga. There is no clear divide to separate post-lineage yoga from what has come before. Post-lineage yoga evolves out of modern postural yoga. Both exist on a spectrum where the former correlates to democratisation and student agency, and the latter to both the standardisation necessary for commercial success, and the hierarchies of knowledge associated with preserving existing practice through lineage.

As this research project ends, significant changes in the cultures of contemporary yoga are taking place in varying national contexts, affected by significant transnational forces. Here in Britain, the British Wheel of Yoga has attempted to create national standards for yoga teaching to address what many teachers see as an epidemic of poorly trained teachers, provoking significant criticism from the wider yoga teaching community, and contributing to the resignation of its own chair (BWY 2018). In America, independent studios are giving way to multinational brands, and the US-based Yoga Alliance has drawn criticism for a lack of oversight of training and teaching standards. Their recent attempts to consult on new standards and a common scope of practice have also provoked controversy, typified by Brown (2018). As the crisis in authority in contemporary transnational yoga continues to widen beyond individual lineages to affect governing bodies and professional organisations, the importance of this thesis reaches beyond its innovative methodology and its vivid portrayal of an understudied phenomenon, to illuminate for the first time a much more widespread renegotiation in the authority to determine practice forms and meaning in yoga.

Post-lineage practitioners replace the authority represented by history, science and guru by that of the expert, the self, and the group. As I have demonstrated in this thesis, the external authority of expertise is confirmed by the internal authority of the self. It is tested by each teacher and practitioner, conditional on ecology and entrainment with others. But most importantly for this research, it is also tested through the relational authority of the group. As this thesis demonstrates, this peer-agreed authority not only the least referenced within contemporary yoga cultural narratives, but also within previous scholarly enquiries into yoga. My research clearly shows how in a *post-lineage* yoga subculture, communal experiences and shared accounts of individualised experience serve together to expand and confirm each person's affordances to new ways of practice, and new ways of living, as part of peer networks of shared knowledge generation.

It is that network of highly invested peers, and the shared roots and shared nourishment that they maintain, that prevents dominant hierarchies from arising. Although it is possible for a teacher to acquire a more exclusive following and thus leave the co-created post-lineage ecology entirely, the greatest value of this subculture is placed not just in a depth of personal history, but in multiple and diverse authorities for shared knowledge. Whilst we can expect similar processes of peer exchange to be present to an extent in both lineage and brand communities, in those communities the flows of horizontal transmission are far more subordinate to the vertical authority of institutional hierarchy. Simply put, within modern postural yoga the innovations of an individual teacher-practitioner may be shared with their own students, although some styles discourage even this level of divergence from the source authority. But any such innovations can only become part of the wider subcultural repertoire subject to some form of hierarchical approval. In schools such as Sivananda Yoga and Ashtanga Yoga, the set practice sequences of the guru maintain their status as pristine originals, and extensive adaptation is frowned upon. Teaching Bikram Yoga and some aspects of Satyananda Yoga involves the repetition of set scripts to frame a pre-set practice. And the majority of lineages and brands remain highly suspicious of any new content that comes from outside of their specific institution. A teacher's identity as, for example, an Iyengar Yoga teacher is constrained by the avoidance of practice content considered to be foreign to the Iyengar system, *even if it is created by another well-recognised yoga school or lineage*. No matter how diverse, each modern postural yoga repertoire is consistent with a single identity consistent with the school and founder.

Democratically developing content, and sharing it with others regardless of affiliation, is definitional of post-lineage yoga. Thus, while individual teachers, organisations, and events might be positioned on a continuum of modern postural to post-lineage yoga activities, its two poles are defined by the acceptability at one end of creating and adopting new practice content, and explicit or implicit protocols disallowing this at the other. And as I showed through the practice structure of audit, remedy, *innovate* and savour, innovation at the level of the individual practitioner is a key element of everyday post-lineage practice.

The post-lineage community profiled in this thesis is therefore only one such uniquely evolving subculture. Its shifting network of overlapping communities of practice comprises an informal system of support that sustains its members against the anxieties and injuries of both daily life, and the pressure and isolation of teaching yoga in more mainstream environments. In coming together, this subculture is further engaged in communal and overtly religious activities at odds with descriptions of transnational yoga as a largely secular, individualised, and casual affair. Such activities are henotheistic, and largely democratic and non-dual in form. They

include a particular focus on *bhakti* and *sevā* as acts of devotion and service that are also acts of community and social justice. The events themselves become unique iterations of shared practice, and shared liminality. Whilst this is a community that accepts diverse levels of engagement, those that organise, maintain, and teach at the camps and other events form a core community that can outnumber more casual involvement. They are highly invested in the subculture, with a multiply-connected or rhizomatic structure of interrelations.

As a result, each person encountered in my research negotiates a unique journey of collaboration and individual expression, both conforming to and questioning the norms that they receive from their teachers, the wider yoga culture, and contemporary society. The resulting inter-relationship between social and political radicalism, teaching style, and questioning lineage is complex and individual. The members of the core community are far more self-aware than the average contemporary yoga practitioner described in previous scholarship. But regardless of their level of investment each practitioner is also part of a uniquely evolving subculture. In the specific environments of my thesis, that subculture is part of a countercultural heritage that a number of scholars with a North American focus in particular, have declared extinct (Urban 2000: 291; Jain 2014a: 21).

## Post-lineage yoga as a unique and unified phenomenon

As a vernacular practice, post-lineage yoga is in part defined by its defiance of labels. Its more reflexive members are actively engaged in reassessing a number of key concepts of modern postural yoga: from *ahimsā* to alignment, from *sevā* to the role of the teacher. Each individual practice is a unique iteration of post-lineage yoga, with its own repertoire. Each practitioner negotiates an individualised axiology and ontology. Each teacher has a recognisable, individual style, even when they collaborate with other teachers. Each camp organiser has their own priorities, and co-creates a uniquely recognisable event within the summer schedule. Beyond the three camps and key figures of this research are many others. Taken together however, there is a significant, coherent, previously unidentified subculture; by exploring this subculture, this thesis makes an important contribution to our understanding of contemporary yoga practice. Its ethics, teaching protocols and practices are ever evolving, and some individuals are more active in that evolution than others, but the subculture negotiates these trends collectively, and largely democratically.

My findings clearly demonstrate that in Britain, at least, there is an intimate connection between that post-lineage yoga practice, and the community network, subcultural norms and specific ecologies of its communal practice. Considering key trends in the history of yoga in

Britain, including its engagement with local counterculture, the British context provides a unique and supportive environment for post-lineage yoga. Yoga here, like much of Europe, and in contrast with North America in particular, is disproportionately influenced by key charismatic figures who were against the totalising effects of yoga institutions, such as Krishnamurti (Goldberg 2016b: 74), Vanda Scaravelli (Scaravelli 1991: 48), and Angela Farmer (Cummins 1997). Its core community, as represented by my case studies, continues that influence with their own shared suspicion of both commercialisation and standardisation. They also maintain multiple, overt and often shared involvements in political and social activism as part of a countercultural ideal, setting the tone, and providing points of easy access for a less-engaged pool of attendees that maintains more conventional lifestyles. Such radicalism, even when it is more of an ideal than a widespread practice, sets itself deliberately against a wider contemporary yoga culture that is considered by this subculture to be hopelessly apolitical, in its focus on individual rather than group empowerment, and its obsession with “positive thinking” (Altglas 2014: 228).

Yoga’s entry into the mainstream of British culture was also effected initially through adult education bodies that promoted standardisation, but also secularisation and democratisation (Newcombe 2013: 58). Despite the influence of local education initiatives, British yoga has no single organising body to mirror Yoga Alliance in the US. The commodification that seems inexorable and inescapable in analyses of American yoga (Strauss and Mandelbaum 2013: 177) seems thus far to be less prevalent in Britain. Whilst in broad terms yoga in America is governed by entrepreneurial forces, in Britain, the constraining factors are arguably more bureaucratic in nature. But that bureaucracy has not led to significant standardisation or a single centralised authority. Further research may well discover that although the community of practice described in this thesis may be unusually coherent, post-lineage yoga, as a definitional attitude to teaching authority and student agency, is likely to apply to a great deal of teaching here in Britain.

Beyond Britain, pointers to the prevalence of post-lineage subcultures must remain speculative at this point. In 2012 Katy Poole (2012) wrote an article on a well-regarded yoga-related site about the recent troubles in Anusara Yoga, with the prophetic conclusion that the era of “the sage on the stage” in yoga was coming to an end. More recently, scholar Carol Horton’s description of a “new paradigm” for yoga has much in common with the post-lineage yoga of this thesis (Horton 2018). There are growing signs of a post-lineage approach to yoga that clearly differs both from the more institutionalised systems of many ashrams, and contemporary yoga brand leaders and their franchised trainings.



Multiple allegations of abusive behaviours by perhaps the most well-known guru of modern yoga, Pattabhi Jois, such as in the twice-published article by Anneke Lucas (2016), and even visual records (yogagurusrevealed 2014; YogaDork 2009) have persisted for some years. But in the wake of Matthew Remski's very recent re-telling of the stories of Jois' accusers (2018b), we can already trace the evolution of one of the most enduring examples of modern guru lineage culture into a post-lineage authority structure. This can be evidenced by close attention to the varying and rapidly evolving responses by well-known teachers of Jois' Ashtanga Vinyasa series, including those, such as Scott Johnson (2018), Anthony Grim Hall (2018) and Sarai Harvey Smith (2018) already calling for major changes to the Ashtanga Yoga teaching hierarchy. This thesis is now representative of a rising trend: a wave of questioning established paradigms and authorities in yoga that will have profound and unforeseeable effects in the years to come.

Some transnational yoga communities seem more likely to embrace a post-lineage authority structure than others. It is unhelpful to associate the differences between lineage and post-lineage yoga with any perceived differences between what some might consider to be traditional and commodified forms. Standardisation and centralised authority are common, but not inevitable, in any yoga institution. There is much more correlation apparent between teachers of all forms of yoga who emphasise the agency and self-determination of the student, and those that embrace post-lineage authority structures. Teachers trained by Vanda Scaravelli, as I have shown, have often inherited from her a distrust of formal institutionalisation. The Desikachar-trained yoga community has similar tendencies, and has been involved in numerous struggles with the institutionalisation of authority, as shown in statements by Paul Harvey (2013b) and Leslie Kaminoff (2018). Some commodified yoga brands such as Bikram Choudhury's Bikram Yoga on the other hand are extremely authoritarian in the prescription of both practice and teaching protocols (Friedman 2015; Healy 2015; Jain 2012: 7).

It can be argued that lineage, as its role is understood in modern postural yoga, developed in close relationship to commodification and modernism (Sarbacker 2014: 108) just as it developed in close relationship with Indian independence and post-colonialism, from pre-modern precedents in ascetic lineages (Singleton 2013: 45). The major transnational lineages are as much brands or family businesses as religious lineages (Krishna 2016). What is often considered to be traditional, lineage-based yoga, is also shaped by the forces of modernity. There is no clear line to neatly separate them from the secularised, commodified yoga of brands, nor from the lineages of pre-modern history (Sarbacker 2014: 109-10). Beyond the clearly recognisable and coherent subculture of this thesis, terms such as lineage and brand,

modern postural and post-lineage, describe forces that unevenly shape subcultures along a continuum.

As a result, it may be that not only is post-lineage yoga a more *common* phenomenon than it first appears, but also that it might be more *historically distributed* than current research can account for. Beyond the practice sanctioned by major lineages, ashrams and historical texts, as historians of yoga seek to understand the vernacular precedents and historical authority structures of postural practice (Broo 2015), there may be a very different picture to emerge of the forms of yoga that have been shared historically in local communities across South Asia, outside of institutions. Whilst specific historical communities probably drew from a narrower repertoire than is available to most contemporary practitioners, there may be many such small-scale scenes or subcultures (Moberg and Ramstedt 2016: 160), themselves made up of overlapping communities of practice.

## The common processes of post-lineage yoga

Even within a specific subculture, post-lineage yoga as a practice of movement and stillness is diverse in form, intent, and meaning. Whilst there are many shared subcultural reference points discussed in this thesis, any typologies of the sensory and kinetic repertoire of the practice will always be incomplete, given how rapidly each post-lineage subculture evolves. For this research project, staying close to the lived experiences at the heart of post-lineage yoga, it was vital to determine not an exhaustive typology or map for the practice repertoire, but to determine the steps in the process of mapping itself.

I identified a common structure that applies to both group and individual, taught and self-created practices. This practice cycle is another major output of the research, likely to be of interest to other researchers of this and other similar practices. It begins in auditing the self, moves to mining the existing repertoire for remedies, on to innovating new practice elements, and savouring the results of that practice. In this, despite its non-authoritarian and non-sectarian relationship to innovation, it is consistent with the productive tension inherent to many historical and contemporary forms of yoga: between introspective reception, and intentional expression, with the aim of evolving some new experience of the self. In comparison to yoga's recent history, it is most distinctive in its wholesale transfer of the governance of the individual practice cycle to the individual practitioner, who audits and remedies their own needs, rather than relying on a teacher. Modern postural yoga is more likely to position the teacher as an expert guide who makes practice decisions on behalf of their students.

Thus, in post-lineage yoga shared practice exists in productive tension with individualised practice, both governed by the practice cycle. The porousness of both practice repertoire and cultural norms between self and group is mirrored in the attempted reconciliation between internal selfhood and external ecology by each practitioner. Adapting from Michel de Certeau's understanding of mysticism, dedicated post-lineage practitioners are seeking both within and beyond language: a place in which to move; a different conception of subjective identity; and a new repertoire of movement (Blevins 2008: 39). The use of practices of stillness and movement to evolve identity in this way is not unique to the yoga of this thesis. But it is promoted by the emphasis on iterative practice as the means of attaining benefit. Every practice is an act of faith with the ultimate but far-distant potential for internal healing and revolution. Each class is a contagious space in which transmission occurs not just through instruction, but also entrainment and mimicry. Each person is a colony of many voices, and intentions for the practice are easier to define than the governing agent that sets each intention. The processes of dwelling and crossing inherent in the development of yoga are echoed in the dwellings and crossings of each post-lineage practitioner, reaching out from the existing sense of self to new spaces, new collaborations, and to human and more than human partners to create new ways and places of being at home (Tweed 2006: 75).

As this cyclical process is independent of the content of practice, this aspect of the thesis has wide applicability to future investigations of the evolution of other post-lineage subcultures. In the later chapters of this thesis, I examined the various processes of self-creation and maintenance in detail, through six unique case studies. Some practitioners take existing practices to be given but modular elements, intuitively chosen, some re-interpret the detail of practice according to a perceived deeper or original intention, and others seek divine, often 'feminine' inspiration. Some work towards an idealised, pristine self, others with the self as microbial temple, still more ritually construct ecological oases in which to explore intimacy and seek private truths. Some seek to confront the world, transform their own habits, and create resilience in disciplining the nervous system. Others dance with phenomenological experience and sanctify suffering. Post-lineage practice may be unusual but not unique in offering such opportunities for self-narration, self-reconciliation, self-empowerment and self-as-ecology. In the long, iterative process of turning personal gnosis into shareable content, deeply intimate experiences of every possible mundane human suffering, from torn ligaments to chronic anxiety, are transformed by daily practice into narratives of hope and relief. As a result of such domestication of suffering into easily digestible stories of success, perhaps, following Carrette and King, the *shared* experience of post-lineage yoga is sometimes "not quite troubling enough" (2013: 5).

What became clear as a result of this analysis is that there are inherent risks to both individual and group practice, as a highly self-determined and yet intimately relational endeavour. The deliberate interconnections made between physical and mental health, spiritual advancement, and world-changing action involve not just endless slippages between intention, outcome and side effect, but intensify the pressure on the practice to solve any possible intra- or interpersonal problem. In transferring the practice to others, the risks and rewards of individual practice are amplified. Post-lineage yoga does not wholly reconcile a troubled history of performativity, internality and universality within modern postural yoga, riding in the tension between training the body to external, geometric shapes, and finding shapes that conform to inner experience. And its teachers largely still teach in person, performing the charisma of health in the form of physical exceptionalism, or performing the narrative charisma of telling personal stories resonant with ancient magic.

The pragmatism of sharing the role of teacher, of being surrounded by peers, and of communal service, may temper the power to unduly influence others. But the translation of the practice cycle to teaching environments, no matter how democratically organised or intuitively innovative, is as yet unevenly achieved. Post-lineage teaching, like its individual practice, is a highly semiogenetic process, in which meaning-making is entangled with inspiration and aspiration, modelling and enactment, charisma and catharsis. As a group movement practice, it is also complicated by powerful processes of mimesis that imbue bodily practice with hidden mechanisms of influence via association, empathy and metaphor. There can be an elision in the practice between the body and agency of teacher and student, in which it becomes unclear whose experience is narrated, who describes the intention and who decides the remedy. In this thesis, I have noted some developments that seem to be useful in clarifying consent and agency during teaching, including invitational language, accessibility modifications, and protocols of consent. More work, and more research, in this area would be useful for the subculture.

## The socio-political context of post-lineage yoga

As a contemporary global practice of great cultural diversity, yoga helps to support a number of extremely profitable international industries (Lavrence and Lozanski 2014: 77; Goldberg 2015; Hauser 2013a: 6). The marketing of innumerable health-related products use yoga-related imagery (Puustinen and Rautaniemi 2015: 48). Yoga clothing mega-brand Lululemon currently reports sales of over \$900 million a quarter (Shaw 2018). Yet none of these industries contribute to the financial stability of yoga teachers in any country, beyond a few highly-paid, international celebrity teachers. Yoga teaching for the majority is described as increasingly

competitive and poorly paid (Goldberg 2015). And seeking to govern this grassroots, chaotically diverse, often female-led enterprise of teaching yoga, are a number of mostly male, mostly white business graduates (Hargreaves 2018a). In this regard, much of the rest of the world differs from America only in degree.

In various national and international contexts, bureaucrats, lineages, brands, new media platforms, scholars, practitioners, and governments, are currently struggling to define and thus control yoga. The separation of yoga culture into yoga-consuming industry, bureaucratic regulation, and practice-producing communities is a useful generalisation to employ here. If we are to determine the mechanisms of authority in yoga beyond the data of this thesis, it is vital to delineate its mechanisms of power and profit. And as older systems of patriarchal, institutionalised authority within yoga are breaking down, the emerging calls to professionalise or regulate yoga teaching from any quarter are in fact unlikely to safeguard the future of yoga teachers, but instead reduce vital diversity, and increase the economic insecurity of the practice community (Hargreaves 2018b: 4). The right to profit from yoga, can include the right to define it.

But post-lineage yoga, in any form, has thus far provided no systematic justice in instances of abuse by charismatic teachers, and few safe spaces for constructive networking online (Howard 2013: 83). It is possible that as a form of transmission, it does not scale well beyond small, in-person networks. Nor does the valuable peer support offered by such networks negate the vulnerable position of many teachers within the now-endemic and precarious 'gig economy'. This may be a practice promoting localised resilience and service (Oh and Sarkisian 2012: 315), but not one of organised social reform. Nonetheless, the yoga practice of the sort shared in this thesis provides for many, one of a number of similar practices, also used as imperfect answers to rising levels of social isolation, anxiety and exhaustion (hooks 2016; Rosa 2004: 697).

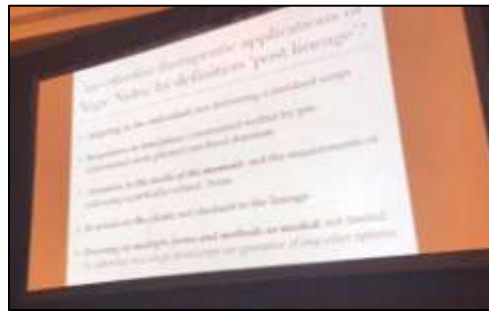
Much of the future transmission of post-lineage yoga as a practice may depend on whether it will retain the flexibility of currently evolving peer-networked authority, and also honour the depth of powerful experience and semiogenesis inherent in current iterations of the practice, even as it responds to new socio-political pressures and growing demands for 'safe' practice spaces. Any large national or even transnational organisation of yoga teachers that wishes to support the ongoing evolution of post-lineage yoga would do well to consider itself as a diverse federation of linked subcultures, local scenes and communities, grounded in the creativity of real-world crossings and dwellings. If so, whether they are self-identified as such

or not, post-lineage networks will retain their clear role in the pragmatic localisation of yoga practice.

When the majority of those engaged in that localisation are white Anglophones, such as here in Britain, the tangled history of colonial oppression in South Asia continues to hold some influence over that process. This thesis does not contribute significantly to that debate, not least in order to defer to Indian and diasporic voices in that regard. But in India, yoga teaching has historically been a vehicle for political struggles in caste and class relationships, against colonialism, and for the development of a newly independent national identity. The current nationalist government continues that long history by devoting increasing resources to the global promotion of a specifically Indian and Hindu yoga as a form of political soft power (Black 2016: 29; Hauser 2013a: 6). As an unfortunate side effect, transnational social media debates about authenticity in the practice have, in recent years, seen a troubling rise in anti-intellectualism and the essentialisation of Indian religious identities, as detailed by Jain (2014b) and Patankar (2014), and exemplified by Reynolds (2015).

New media technologies enable many of the interpersonal conversations at the heart of yoga peer networking, but also more fraught, even aggressive interactions between yoga subcultures with very different values and priorities (Horton 2015, 2016). The targeted trolling of prominent writers, public figures and scholars of yoga such as myself, for political or personal gain, is becoming an ingrained problem across social media platforms. In the public conversations among teachers of all forms of contemporary yoga, tensions between orthopraxy, commodification, and international politics, are intensifying.

Like any similar academic endeavour, this thesis seeks only to describe, not bestow approval upon the phenomenon of post-lineage yoga. Yet drawing a definitional boundary around this diffuse and diverse phenomenon is already allowing yoga teachers to define their relationships to authority in new ways. Over the page, a celebrated Ashtanga Yoga teacher uses the term 'postlineage' as a hashtag on a post declaring his independence from the Mysore teaching hierarchy. And Uma Dinsmore-Tuli centres her keynote speech for the International Association of Yoga Therapists on whether the organisation is "proudly post lineage".



uploaded to Facebook on 14<sup>th</sup> June and 18<sup>th</sup> June 2018, respectively

For many who have become uncomfortable with self-definitions grounded in lineage, brand, or other institutional identity, the label of post-lineage yoga is an opportunity to discover themselves as part of a trend beyond their immediate community of practice. For those most threatened by the recognition of any yoga subculture with grassroots approaches to recognising authority and authenticity however, the term is immediately threatening, and provokes aggressive responses and malicious misinterpretation. It is in that context that this thesis will be published, and its importance becomes ever more evident.

## Implications and suggestions for existing and future research

Vernacular subcultures such as those practising post-lineage yoga are an understudied phenomenon (Bender 2012: 281; Primiano 1995: 38). The scope of this research, as a doctoral project with a single researcher, could not contain a full analysis of post-lineage yoga as a widespread evolution in the transmission of yoga practice. As such, it leaves many fruitful avenues for future research. A larger project could investigate the extent and diversity of post-lineage yoga in many different localised, emplaced subcultural forms.

At every stage of the research project however, wider implications of the data under consideration became clear. The co-practice method is a particularly fruitful way to study contemporary practices as both movement repertoires, and sites of meaning-making. It would enhance any interdisciplinary study comparing the kinesthetic phenomenology of movement, familiar from dance studies, and the somaesthetic phenomenology of stillness, familiar from studies of religion. The notation method could be expanded, and form the foundation of an investigation into the various emic forms of notation used in different subcultural repertoires. A few researchers have already expressed interest in exploring the system for the comparative investigation of movement practices that have more than performative intent (Constantini

2018). The broader concepts of methodology as experiment, and methodological *sevā* or service, are also useful concepts to contribute to the study of religion more broadly.

This thesis contributes to ongoing debates on the embodied positionality of the researcher, to the study of vernacular and lived religious practice, and to existing literature on ritual enactment and to what Tweed describes as “the role of personal agency in the kinetics of religious dwelling and crossing.” (2006: 176). It makes significant contributions to the field given that the scholarly history of bodily, lived experience is a recent concern within the study of religion. Our academic concepts of transmission are largely based in textual transmission. Whilst Aristotelian definitions of the esoteric are of those practices that necessitate oral transmission and presence (“esoteric” 2016), much more work remains to uncover the mechanisms, risks and rewards of the kind of in person, embodied and esoteric transmission that post-lineage yoga practice exemplifies.

Beyond the methodology, the understudied subculture, and the wider processes of negotiated authority set out herein, this thesis provides critical answers to existing assumptions concerning religious practice as identity maintenance, to the shared construction of meaning, to performative agency, and to religious henotheism and consumerism. It attempts to move debates about yoga as religious practice from embodied mindfulness to animated bodies, from institutions to vernacular communities, from the universal to the diverse. Within this thesis, multiple possible definitions of yoga: as repeated method; as a focus of discipline; as aim, intention or state, and as shared subculture and repertoire, are all addressed. This thesis highlights the difference between the individuality and secularity of discourses surrounding contemporary yoga, and the often communal, ritual nature of its actual lived experience (Nye 2000: 458). It shows that ritualised movement is part of the meaning (more than) human beings choose to create both alone and together. But it is also meaning as we are compelled to enact and experience it (Spickard 2005: 354). And it is the place where these two activities meet. Thus, the bare components of post-lineage yoga practice are visceral memories, movement as self-creation, and flesh shaped through action.

As my focus throughout has been to amplify unheard stories, I am however aware of how many of those stories are left to be told. Modern yoga research, particularly the anthropological study of yoga, would greatly benefit from significant investigation into such experiences as: the lived history of yoga practitioners of colour; the motivations of those who have left the practice behind; more diverse Indian and diasporic voices on yoga (Spivak 2008: 79); and the experiences of those vulnerable populations using yoga to innovative ends, particularly trauma survivors, prison populations and disabled students.



## Final thoughts

My research question was:

**Within contemporary post-lineage British yoga culture, how does the yogic body in practise change to reflect its evolving meaning, and the relationships of authority within which it is shared?**

Only the extremely privileged have the possibility of considering their physical existence to be normal, stable, or safe. The rest survive through reconciliation with the body we are, with all its wounds and healings, imposed habits and transformations. It is possible to consider all the diverse practices of contemporary and historical yoga as responses to different forms of suffering, in keeping with many other religious practices. To the extent that they are technologies of liberation, they are never apolitical or disembodied. Bodies in yoga move, breathe, align and transform. Bodies in yoga are colonised and decolonised, commercialised, sanitised and reclaimed, in contested space. Under the skin of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyahara* and *kīrtan*, politics, pain, joy and belief are mattered in flesh.

Without patronage or orthodox approval, without academic or public visibility, scattered and networked across time and space, post-lineage practitioners are already finding, teaching, and supporting each other. The most significant transmission innovation of yoga in the modern era may well be practising as a group, and yet both scholars, and teacher-practitioners, are only just beginning to understand what it means for bodies to practise this most intimate of arts together.

Finally, and most clearly, at the heart of post-lineage yoga are practitioners mimicking a long heritage of predecessors in the imperfect attempt to create an emplaced, embodied counter-practice to the pressures of their time. With the right allies, the right framing, and the right practice, they hope that the individual and group bodies that emerge might be less easy to predict, to control, and to market. Theirs is a spiralling technology of individual practice and group entrainment. It maps the many layers of the self-world in accordance with an ever-evolving repertoire of movement and stillness. Above all, post-lineage yoga continues to take place off the mat and in the world, even as the practitioner dreams of transcendence, of silence, and of reconciliation.

# Glossary

## Yoga

A regular routine of self-conscious and somatically aware, ritualised movement within subcultures of practice that are linked to shared, if diverse beliefs, and engaged in complex relationships with the mythologies and ontologies of the Indian sub-continent.

## Post-lineage yoga

A subculture of yoga practice in which teachers and practitioners that have rejected or been ostracized from their lineage of study come together in peer-to-peer networks to evolve and share yoga practice with others who maintain allegiance to a lineage, but look beyond it as the sole authority to determine practice.

## Indic terms

<b><i>āsana</i></b>	Originally 'seat', refers to the postures and movements of physical practice
<b><i>bhakti</i></b>	Practices of devotion, commonly including <i>sevā</i> and <i>kīrtan</i>
<b><i>haṭhayoga</i></b>	A collection of practices that traditionally includes <i>āsana</i> , <i>prāṇāyāma</i> and meditation, for much of its history associated with certain anti-social behaviours, reclaimed as the foundation of modern postural yoga
<b><i>kīrtan</i></b>	Devotional singing, often in call and response form
<b><i>kriyā</i></b>	Cleansing practices that can overlap in form with <i>āsana</i> or <i>prāṇāyāma</i>
<b><i>mantra</i></b>	Repetitive chanting with devotional or magical intent
<b><i>mudrā</i></b>	Ritualised hand gesture for devotional or magical intent
<b><i>mūrti</i></b>	Representation of a divine being that is also a living embodiment of the same
<b><i>prāṇāyāma</i></b>	Practices of breath observation and/or control

<b><i>pūjā</i></b>	Devotional ritual consisting of chants and offerings made to figures on an altar
<b><i>sevā</i></b>	Devotional service, originally to the guru, now with a diversity of communal or humanitarian targets
<b><i>yoganidrā</i></b>	A form of guided deep relaxation originally developed from an esoteric Tantric technique known as <i>nyāsa</i>

## Technical terms

<b>entrainment</b>	Often unconscious synchronisation of organic movement such as gesture and heart rate to an external rhythm
<b>interoception</b>	Awareness of one's internal physiological condition
<b>kinetic</b>	Pertaining to movement
<b>mimesis</b>	Physical imitation, mimicry
<b>proprioception</b>	Awareness of the body relative to its environment
<b>semiogenesis or semiogenetic</b>	Meaning-making or productive of meaning
<b>sensorimotor</b>	Involving both sensory and motor activity, such as sensorimotor amnesia, the partial and uneven loss of bodily sensation and movement through trauma or disuse
<b>somatic</b>	Pertaining to the senses

## Key people

<b>Christopher</b>	Case study 1, teacher of Engaged Yoga
<b>Ian</b>	Co-founder of the One Spirit Ashram Kitchen
<b>Nicole</b>	Case study 6, teacher of Soma Yoga

<b>Robbie</b>	Co-founder of Colourfest festival
<b>Rowan</b>	Co-founder of Colourfest festival
<b>Sivani Mata</b>	Case study 4, <i>bhakti</i> musician and teacher of Womb Yoga and Shakti Dance
<b>Tanya</b>	Case study 5, co-founder of Sundara community event with her husband John
<b>Trishula</b>	Founder of the Beltane Bhakti Gathering
<b>Uma</b>	Case study 3, founder of Santosa Living Yoga and Bhakti Camp
<b>Veronika</b>	Case study 1, teacher of Reflex Yoga

## Subcultural influences

<b>Ashtanga (Vinyasa) Yoga</b>	A specific <i>āsana</i> and <i>vinyāsa</i> based practice fixed during the nineteenth century Mysore yoga revival by Pattabhi Jois
<b>(Sri Haidakhandi) Babaji</b>	One of numerous Hindu saints known as Babaji
<b>British Wheel of Yoga</b>	The most secular and normative of governing institutions in the UK, it has links to Iyengar Yoga, various LEAs and Skills Active
<b>Divine feminine</b>	A school of feminist religious thought, with associated yoga forms that focus on female representation and practices appropriate for female bodies, exemplified by Angela Farmer and Vanda Scaravelli
<b>Hatha Yoga</b>	Designation often used when a yoga practice is outside the most common and visible lineages, sometimes used to designate a gentler practice form
<b>Independent Yoga Network</b>	The most independent and smallest of the three main yoga governing institutions in the UK
<b>Integral Yoga</b>	Yoga practice inspired by and developed from the teachings of Swami Satchidananda, promoting the holistic integration of spiritual activities

<b>Iyengar Yoga</b>	Corrective, therapeutic and <i>āsana</i> -based practice for health that closely follows the teachings of BKS Iyengar, part of the Mysore yoga revival
<b>Kundalini Yoga</b>	Yoga practice inspired by and developed from the teachings of Yogi Bhajan, focused on esoteric development and raising Kuṇḍalinī
<b>Reflex Yoga</b>	Therapeutic yoga techniques developed by Veronika de la Pena and Nicole Zimbler from lay understandings of infant neurology
<b>Satyananda Yoga</b>	Tantra-derived yoga practices inspired by the teachings of Swami Satyananda
<b>Scaravelli-inspired Yoga</b>	‘Feminine’ yoga practices inspired by the lifework of Vanda Scaravelli, who refused to have a school named after her
<b>Shakti Dance</b>	Kundalini Yoga inspired combination of yoga and dance
<b>Sivananda Yoga</b>	Patañjali-inspired yoga practice developed from the teachings of Swami Sivananda, contemporary with the Mysore yoga revival
<b>Total Yoga Nidra Network</b>	Learning community of post-lineage <i>yoganidrā</i> teachers co-founded by Uma Dinsmore-Tuli and her husband, Nirlipta Tuli
<b>Vipassana</b>	Popular Buddhist form of meditation including Anapana (breath awareness), systematic bodily observation and the cultivation of equanimity
<b>Womb Yoga</b>	Contemporary yoga school emphasising seasonal rhythms and the divine feminine developed by Uma Dinsmore-Tuli
<b>Yoga Alliance</b>	Voluntary but dominant body for accrediting yoga teaching in the US, with an increasingly international reach
<b>Yoga Alliance Professionals, formerly Yoga Alliance UK</b>	The most commercial of governing institutions in the UK, with no formal connection to Yoga Alliance

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